DIVERSITY POLICIES IN EDUCATION IN THE LULA GOVERNMENT

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ABSTRACT

THE DIVERSITY POLICIES IN LULA'S GOVERNMENT. This article analyses how the Department of Education, during the first administration of Lula's government (2003-2006), addressed the diversity principle in the educational agenda, an increasingly predominant issue in the Brazilian educational debate. Initially, a documentary analysis of the actions, programs and administration identified a new institutional arrangement in the Department of Education, especially as far as concerns the diversity agenda. Twenty-four programs were developed during this period. However, these programs used distinct and sometimes contradictory definitions of diversity. It was possible to spot at least three different meanings for the term: a) social inclusion; b) affirmative action; c) difference policies. So, even though diversity has become more institutionalized during Lula's government, it remains an issue of internal dispute, especially regarding how the government should respond to the demands of social movements for the recognition of diversity in the public sphere.
DIVERSITY – PUBLIC POLICIES – EDUCATION – AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The question of diversity, especially over the last ten years, has been increasingly present in the Brazilian educational debate. In the legislative area, Law 10.639/03 was passed that makes the teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture compulsory in every school in the country. This was followed by Law 11.645/08, which also includes the Indian question in school curriculums. In 2004, within the Ministry of Education (*MEC*), a specific department was set up, the Department of Continuing Education, Teaching of Reading and Writing and

Diversity (*Secad*), with the idea, among other issues, of including the theme of diversity in educational policies.

The objective of this article is to analyze in particular what position the *MEC* adopted relative to diversity in its programs, actions and in its functional structure during the first Lula administration (2003-2006). Can we say that diversity is a principle that guides the actions and political agenda of the current government and especially of the Ministry of Education?

To understand the importance attributed to diversity in *MEC's* educational policies we used what Marta Arretche (1998) defines as a public policy analysis, i.e. an examination of the institutional engineering and features that constitute the programs of a particular policy. She distinguishes it, for example, from what she calls public policy evaluation, the peculiarity of which consists in adopting research methods and techniques that allow for the establishment of a causality relationship between a program and a specific result.

Public policy analysis seeks to reconstitute that various characteristics of the organization of a national policy, by seeking "to lend meaning and understanding to the erratic nature of public action", in such a way as to understand it as a more coherent and comprehensible whole (Arretche, 1998, p. 30). However, it is worth observing that

> ...public action is characterized by incoherence, ambiguity and uncertainty at all stages and all the time. Every public policy is largely a coordinated effort of centrifugal forces that operate in the state machinery and in society. Policy formulation is frequently marked by the fact that decision-makers do not know exactly what they want or the possible result of the policies formulated. It is also marked by the fact that the policies adopted are the result of a negotiation process, during which the original design of a program is substantially modified. (Jobert, Muller, apud Arretche, 1998, p. 30)

To enter this debate we initially analyze what literature defines as diversity. Then we observe in what way this issue is apparent in the new institutional designs of the Ministry of Education, in the programs and actions it implements and how diversity is given a new meaning within educational policies.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

At the same time that the word "diversity" may indicate the almost obvious perception of the human, physical, social and environmental variety that exist in our society it comes accompanied by a multiple and complex set of meanings.

In the social science field the word is generally used to describe the heterogeneity of the cultures that mark contemporary society, as opposed to the modern, liberal and western nation-state model that has established itself "over the (generally tacit) assumption of the cultural homogeneity that is organized around universal, secular and individual values" (Hall, 2003, p. 52).

Understood in its cultural dimension diversity is associated with new social movements, especially those that are identity-driven and articulated in the defense of the so-called "policies of difference" (Taylor, 1994; Giroux, 1999; Hall, 2003). Diversity, as the right to be different, expresses the demand for recognition in the public and political sphere by groups that are defined as "minority" and "subordinate", and by certain types of feminist movements.

This demand in Brazil started with of the feminist and black movement sectors in the 1980s and intensified in subsequent years, when it also started involving Indian and handicapped people's movements.

The literature dealing with these issues is identified and associated with the so-called "culture *s*tudies" and post-colonial studies. According to the theories formulated about these perspectives the principle of universal citizenship, which is blind to differences, establishes that all human beings are equally worthy of respect and as a result reinforces the similarities between them.

The difference principle questions the neutrality and effectiveness of this idea of being equally worthy when it states that the private identity of an individual or group is ignored, distorted and forced to conform to a dominant hegemonic culture, which is not his/her/its own, thereby attributing to him/her/it the status of a second class citizens. Therefore, only minorities and non-western people are alienated from their culture and values, which makes the western societies that are blind to difference not only inhuman, because they suppress identity, but also highly discriminatory (Taylor, 1994, p. 43). Consequently, it is understood

that the struggle for the right to be different must first deconstruct the negative self-image attributed by the colonizers to people who are different.

Franz Fanon, in works such as *Os condenados da terra* [The condemned of the land] and *Pele negra, máscara branca* [Black skin, white mask] claims that the great arm used by the colonizers to dominate others was the imposition of a depreciative image of people who were subjugated to themselves. Certain feminists argued, for example, that women, by living in patriarchal societies, are induced to adopt a depreciative image of themselves and to internalize this inferiority to the point that, even when objective obstacles to their progress are eliminated, they may have difficulties in taking advantage of the new opportunities offered. Something similar occurs with the populations of blacks, indigenous people and others who were colonized. So, self-depreciation is transformed into a powerful instrument of oppression and the main objective of these groups has to be to free themselves from this destructive form of identity. In accordance with this understanding, demand for recognition is no mere courtesy to others or the respect we owe them, but a vital human need.

In increasingly more plural societies in terms of the number of people and different cultures that form part of them, what is demanded in terms of recognition is not just that different cultures can defend themselves and survive, but that, in the end, they can attest their equal worth and their right to exist and participate politically in society as a collective group:

> ...contemporary society [...] excludes women and non-whites from various dimensions of social life. This fact imposes the urgent need to radically restructure institutions and the way of managing power in society, in such a way as to allow the effective participation of minorities in new forms of social regulation that includes their different interests. (Silvério, 1999, p. 47)

The political participation of certain groups that are defined by their common cultural identity is the most controversial aspect of these demands and also the most difficult to accommodate. It is possible to identify a concern with cultural diversity in some of the initiatives that have been taken within the scope of Brazilian public policies and linked to questions such as gender, race and ethnicity, especially since the end of the 1990s.

In educational policies the inclusion in the National Curricular Parameters of "cultural plurality" as a transversal theme in 1997 is an example of this. In the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) no. 9.394/96, the fact that there is a specific chapter dealing with special education, the articles directed at indigenous education and the

establishment of November 20 as Black Awareness Day reveal this same concern. It is also worth mentioning the National Education Plan of 2001, which allocated specific chapters to special and indigenous education. But these measures are also fragmented and directed at specific sectors of the public; they have received no orientation from the actions of the Ministry of Education.

Within the academic sphere in the area of public policies, studies in Brazil that theoretically analyze the formulation of policies based on cultural diversity are relatively recent and few and far between (Melo, 1999; Sansone, 1998). In the field of education studies, on the other hand, this issue occurs more often, even if they frequently use concepts of multiculturalism, cultural pluralism and inter-culturality than of cultural diversity when referring to different ways of interpreting the interaction between social groups and their cultures (Gonçalves, Silva, 1998; Candau, 2002; Candau, 2006; Moreira, Silva, 2002).

Likewise, social movements rarely articulate their political discourse around the idea of diversity, preferring terms like the right to be different, anti-racism, anti-sexism, inclusive society and others.

The word "diversity", when used in Brazil, seems generally synonymous with what Stuart Hall defines as "multicultural", a qualifying word that describes the plurality of cultures that are to be found in a particular society. However, "diversity" has also been used, especially in the public authority sphere, as a synonym of "multiculturalism", a substantive word that refers to the political strategies adopted for dealing with the diversity situations that are created in culturally plural societies (Hall, 2003, p. 53).

The debate about the idea of multiculturalism has been considerably disseminated in the educational area; but the meanings attributed to the term are of the most varied. Various authors make an effort to circumscribe the different possible types of multiculturalism (McLaren, 2000; Giroux, 1999; Hall, 2003). From the group of debates unleashed about this theme we can distinguish at least three major aspects that mark and differentiate the oscillating meanings associated with multiculturalism:

a. Knowledge, or otherwise, of the power hierarchies in relations between different cultural groups;
b. A more essential or dynamic view of the cultural identity of certain groups;

c. The articulation, or otherwise, of socio-economic inequality and cultural differences.

Rather than being just a defense or argument in favor of one or other way of dealing with multiculturalism and/or cultural diversity, in this article we intend to identify the ways in which the Ministry of Education in the first Lula administration appropriated this discussion in its programs, actions and functional structure. Can we say that there has been a change in direction in the way in which educational policies have been dealing with this theme? Has the cultural diversity perspective been dealt with in an articulated way as a new orientation for the actions of the Ministry?

NEW INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

By analyzing the documents of the programs and actions, departmental management reports, official speeches made by the ministers ad the decrees approved redefining the structure of the Ministry of Education it was possible to perceive that there is a concern with the question of cultural diversity both in the new institutional designs of the *MEC*, as well as in the activities it undertakes.

In terms of the structure of the Ministry, we identified two different moments when the theme was dealt with. The first was linked to the management of Minister Cristovam Buarque, when diversity was associated with a more general concern with the idea of "social inclusion". A second moment is found in the administration of Tarso Genro, when a specific department was created for dealing with diversity policies in education. This department was retained in the following administration by Fernando Haddad, whose contribution to the theme of diversity was to continue with the work done by Genro.

In harmony with the discourse of the Lula government in its first mandate, the MEC defines social inclusion as one of the four strategic axes of its educational policy. If slogans like "Brazil, a country for everyone" served as the mark of this government, they also gained versions in the educational sector, like, "Education for all" and "Everybody together to democratize education". Education is understood as a privileged area for social inclusion, a perspective that has guided MEC's reorganization since the beginning of 2003. Among the new departments created in the Ministry in the government's first year, two of them have as

their priority the question of inclusion: the Special Department for the Eradication of Illiteracy (Seea) and the Department of Educational Inclusion (Secrie).

Secrie, which has responsibility for the School Grant Program, started its activities by setting up the Network of Educational Inclusion Agents, which among its other activities, tried to register all the children, who were not in school in Brazil in 2003. Seea, which was created in July of that same year, also began to register the illiterate population. Both defined social inclusion, equity and improvements in the inequality situation and social and educational vulnerability as their objectives. One of Seea's goals was even to start teaching reading and writing in former slave colonies and indigenous communities.

These departments had, however, short institutional lives. When Minister Cristovam Buarque was substituted by Tarso Genro at the beginning of the second year of government, a new department in MEC was created, the Department of Continuing Education, Teaching Reading and Writing and Diversity, which resulted from the merger of Seea and Secrie and from the incorporation of programs that had previously been handled in other departments of the Ministry (Presidential Decree 5.159, dated 7/28/04).

As from this moment there began an attempt to link social inclusion actions with a valuing of ethnic diversity, even though there was a degree of incoherence in the initial documents defining the objectives of the new department:

> The constitution of the *Secad* can be interpreted as an institutional innovation. For the first time programs for educating and teaching young people and adults to read and write, the coordinating offices of indigenous education, field education and environmental education, are all brought together. This structure allows for the articulation of programs for fighting racial and sexual discrimination with those projects that value ethnic diversity. (Brazil, 2004, p. 1)

In its institutional design, the new department tried to combine programs, projects and actions that had been previously spread throughout the Ministry into two departments, Education for Young People and Adults and Education for Diversity and Citizenship, the latter subdivided into five general coordination offices: Indigenous School Education; Diversity and Educational Inclusion; Field Education; Environmental Education; and Complementary Educational Activities. Concentrating the programs on such different issues, public, demands and backgrounds is defended on the grounds that it would be possible, by

means of this new configuration, to strengthen the work being done in each specific area and "transversalize" the idea of diversity through other departments and ministries.

Finding the best way of politically reconciling the various demands of groups which are identified by the fact that they are discriminated against and socially and culturally excluded was a difficulty that also had to be faced by municipal and state governments that decided to work with anti-discriminatory policies and/or those that valued cultural diversity (Moehlecke, 2000). The most frequently adopted solution for replying to these claims has been to create sub-departments or specific councils for dealing with the situation of women, blacks, Indians and the handicapped or even with human rights. If, on the one hand, this measure guarantees the development of actions that at other times would not be taken into consideration, on the other, there is the risk that this work becomes fragmented, creating "ghettos" and making it difficult to disseminate these new guidelines to other departments.

In the case of MEC, one of the measures to try to get around this problem was the creation of theme chambers, the function of which was to circulate the actions of the various departments by holding periodic meetings between their representatives, which had common agendas. In September 2004, nine chambers were set up by ordinance, one of them covering "Education for Diversity", and comprising representatives from Secad (coordinating department), Department of Basic Education (SEB), the Department of Higher Education (Sesu), the State Department for Labor, Employment and Citizenship, (Setec) and the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation. As defined in the ordinance, it is the duty of the chambers to define an agenda for the effective integration of the actions that are the responsibility of the various departments, bearing in mind the need to comply with government programs and achieve their targets (Ordinance. 695 of 9/10/04).

In addition to a concern with articulating the areas that had been previously spread throughout the Ministry, another of the marks that it wants to associate with the policies of MEC and particularly with Secad, is its closeness to organized civil society, whether through assistance committees or partnerships for carrying out projects and programs. What is valued in the documents presenting this department is the participation of a variety of different government and social players in the preparation and development of public policies directed at inclusion and diversity:

> One of its objectives [of *Secad*] is to take the multiplicity of teaching experiences from these areas so as to renew them in educational practices. This is more than just bringing programs together; the task of

the new department is to articulate the competences and experiences developed, both by formal teaching systems and by the practices of social organizations, into instruments for promoting citizenship, valuing diversity and supporting people that live in socially vulnerable situations. [...] To democratize education it is necessary to mobilize the whole of society. The mission of *MEC*, via *Secad*,, is to promote the union of efforts with state and municipal governments, NGOs, trades unions and professional and residents' associations. (Brazil, 2004, p. 1)

In the period studied, MEC also set up two commissions related to diversity by means of ordinances: the Diversity Assistance Commission for Matters related to those of African Descent (Cadara), which was created in 2003, and the National Indigenous School Education Commission (CNEEI) in 2004. The function of both was to help the Department and Ministry formulate policies for social inclusion and for fighting ethnic and racial discrimination in educational systems. They also support actions that involve adopting procedures related to education for people of African and Indian descent.

Overall, such organizational mechanisms start from an understanding that to deal with such different themes and demands, such as those that include diversity policies, it is necessary to use a decentralized action strategy, based on the coordination, articulation and induction of policies at the three levels of government, with the involvement also of non-governmental players (Brazil, 2005).

An example of this operating option, defined in the department's documents as a "harmonizing policy", are the state forums and seminars held to mobilize relevant players for developing inclusion and diversity policies, which bring together managers of teaching systems, local authorities, representatives of social movements and organizations and segments directly interested in the advance of this particular agenda. In 2004 alone more than 60 meetings were held in all Brazil's states, from which specific agendas were defined for each of the areas in which Secad operates:

To a certain extent, the area in which these [diversity] policies are being forged is located where State and civil society converge, thereby constituting a new dimension in the public sphere. This is where one of the principle new aspects of the inclusion and diversity agenda lies. (Brazil, 2005, p. 18)

This "harmonizing" strategy is presented as an important channel for participation and dialogue between MEC and the social groups that are organized for constructing an agenda of diversity policies. However, this may not be its only function. It is necessary to be alive to the

possibility that these participation mechanisms may also serve as means of reducing the tensions and the constant and growing pressures that government sometimes suffers. It was not our objective to find out from the material we consulted how this interaction dynamic between government and society actually happens. But we note that in democratic States and societies there is always a tenuous balance between the openness of government to social demands through the creation of spheres of participation and the joint definition of policies and its inability to respond to all the claims it receives.

In the other MEC departments we saw no change in their structures in such a way as to incorporate the perspective of cultural diversity. But it is worth mentioning the situation of special education, which is dealt with in a different way within the Ministry.

Even though the concern with diversity and the right to be different are associated in various MEC documents, the so-called "inclusive education" retained an autonomous and distinct institutional link. It underwent no changes when the minister changed in 2004. in this same year, when the thematic chambers were created, special education was not allocated any representation in the Diversity in Education Chamber; instead, a specific technical chamber was created to deal with this type of teaching. The fact that there has been a specific department, the Department of Special Education (Seesp) since the previous government, and the fact that it was maintained in the current government, in addition to it receiving greater regulation, perhaps explains why special education is handled separately from other diversity themes and those affected by it and does not form part of the new department that was created.

A more detailed analysis of the programs, projects and actions dealing with diversity that have been introduced by the Ministry if Education may help us understand better in what way and to what degree each one of the departments is involved with the topic.

DIVERSITY PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

In each of the MEC departments we analyzed the programs, projects and activities that in some way deal with the question of cultural diversity. Having initially mapped out the situation we organized a descriptive table with the main characteristics: internal and external articulation, the date activities started and the objectives. This allowed us to assess the limits

and possibilities introduced by the new institutional arrangements established for the Ministry of Education.

The normative milestones that were defined in the period studied and that cover diversity and the area of education are Law 10.639/03, which makes it compulsory to teach Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture in schools, and the National Curricular Guidelines for the Education of Ethno-Racial Relations (Resolution n.1, dated 6/17/2004), instituted by the National Education Council, which regulates the previous law. Other measures approved were Decree 5.296/04, relating to services for handicapped people and Decree 5.626/05, which regulates Brazilian Sign Language (Libra).

In this period MEC also asked the National Congress to consider Legislative Bill 3.627/04, which earmarks a percentage of places in IFEs [federal higher education institutions] for students from public schools, and for blacks and Indians, and Legislative Bill 7.200/06, which proposes a reform of Brazilian higher education, and which establishes, among other things, affirmative action policies for blacks, Indians and students from public schools.

Also highlighted are the National Education Plan in Human Rights (PNEDH), from 2003, the National Policy Plan for Women and the Brazil without Homophobia Program from 2004, all formulated, albeit in different ways, with the participation of organized civil society. Despite not being initiatives exclusively from MEC and not having a normative nature, by defining a set of targets for the government these plans help when it comes to monitoring the actions of the ministry as far as these specific agendas are concerned.

Within what MEC defined as diversity policies in the first administration of the Lula government, a total of 24 programs/projects/actions were identified (Table 1). Compared with the previous government, we can see a clear increase in the number of programs implemented in the area, with an emphasis on those directed towards ethnic-racial diversity. Two programs from the previous government were maintained by the Lula administration, with one of them being approved in the last three months of the mandate and reformulated in the following years. With the exception of special education, which has two programs that had already started in 2003, the other programs began to function mainly in the second and third years of government and almost all of them were still on-going at the end of 2006.

In analyzing the characteristics of each of the programs, it was possible to separate them into two types, according to the nature of the activity that they proposed carrying out:

programs directed at access to goods and services for certain groups of people, such as blacks, Indians and women; lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals and transgender individuals (LGBTT); the handicapped and low income people; and programs that try to develop activities for forming, debating and producing knowledge about cultural diversity in education.

TABLE 1
PROGRAMS/PROJECTS/ACTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION THAT DEAL WITH DIVERSITY

Institution responsible*	Program/action	Start date	ACTIVITY
SEB	National Program for Assessing Textbooks	1998-**	Observation of the possible dissemination of ethnic-racial stereotypes in the assessment criteria of textbooks.
Sesu	Student Funding Program *Law 10,260/01*	1999-	In 2004, in addition to income, color/race and school attended were included as funding criteria.
Secad	Diversity in Universities Program *Law 10,558/02*	2002 (set.)-	Project for funding pre-university entrance exam courses to facilitate the access of those of African and indigenous descent to higher education (2003 to date). In 2004 state forums were held to strengthen the theme of ethnic-racial diversity; in 2006, the Tutoria Project for young black people in high school and university was created and developed the training of elementary school teachers in Law 10,639/2003.
Seesp	Inclusive Education Program: Right to be Different	2003-	Support for the dissemination of inclusive education in municipalities, with teaching equipment and material being made available.
Seesp/Capes	Special Education Support Program	2003-	Support and encouragement for new specialist and specific research for professionals who work in inclusive education.
Partnership - *MEC/Seppir*	Former Brazilian Slave Settlement Program	2003-	Actions for forming teachers for the remaining slave settlement areas, state forums, improvements in the school network and the production of teaching material.
Partnership - *MEC/Sedh*	Preparation of the National Education Plan in Human Rights	2003 e 2006	Systematization of a series of education programs/actions in human rights, which has, as one of its principles, respect for diversity.
Sesu	Preparation of legislative bill, Law 7,200/06: Reform of higher education	2004	Proposes regulations for Brazilian higher education and defines affirmative action policies for black students, Indians and those from low income backgrounds.
Partnership - *MEC/ Seppir*	Inter-ministerial Affirmative Action Policy Committee	2004/ 2005	PL 3,627/04 prepared and sent to Congress: it earmarks a percentage of places in IFEs for students from public schools, blacks and Indians.
Sesu	University extension project for inclusion	2004-	Covers university specialization programs, with an emphasis on the inclusion of handicapped and indigenous people and those from former slave settlements.
Sesu	Monitoring affirmative actions in the *IES*	2004-	Setting up of a database about public IFEs and IEEs [state higher education institutions] that adopt affirmative actions.
Seesp	Educating in Diversity Project	2004-	Training school teachers for developing inclusive education

			practices.
Secad	Ethnic and Cultural Identity Program for Indigenous People	2004	Financing indigenous education projects, teaching materials and teacher training.
Secad	Diversity in University Program	2004-	Systematization of information about the supply and demand of high school education in Indian territories.
Partnership - *SEB* (*MEC*)/*Sedh*	Ethics and Citizenship Program	2004	Setting up of ethics and citizenship forums in public schools, covering the themes of social inclusion and discrimination.
Sesu	University for Everybody Program *Law 11,096/05*	2004-	Study scholarships for students from low income backgrounds, with a percentage of places reserved for blacks, Indians and handicapped people.
Secad	Connecting Knowledge Project	2004-	Encouragement for university articulation and popular communities, with scholarships for students. It has 32 *Ifes*.
Partnership - *MEC*/ *Seppir*/ *Sedh*/*MS*	Integration of Affirmative Actions for Blacks Program	2004-	Distribution of 500 scholarships for university students to research themes related to STD/AIDS.
Sesu /*Seesp*	Include Program	2005-	Seeks to guarantee that students with special needs have equal opportunities for accessing and remaining in higher education.
Sesu /*Secad*	Program for Higher Education and Indigenous Teaching Courses	2005-	Supports public IES projects in indigenous communities, to provide higher education for indigenous teachers and for students to remain in university.
Sesu /*Secad*	Affirmative Actions for the Black Population Program	2005-	Support for the projects of the Afro-Brazilian Studies centers for producing knowledge about the ethnic-racial theme and expanding the access of blacks to higher education.
Secad	Education for Diversity and Citizenship Program	2005-	Support for qualifying education professionals with regard to the themes of sexual orientation and gender identity.
Secad	Educating for Equality Project: Gender, Race and Sexual Orientation	2005-2006	Teacher training: gender, sexual orientation and ethnic-racial diversity in 5 states.
Sesu	Milton Santos Project for Access to Higher Education	2005-	Study scholarships for students from developing countries, especially African.

* Within *MEC* the following departments are involved with diversity policies: Department of Basic Education (*SEB*); Department of Higher Education (*Sesu*); Department of Continuing Education, Teaching to Read and Write, and Diversity (*Secad*); Department of Special Education (*Seesp*). With regard to partnerships with other Ministries, we have the Ministry of Health (*MS*), the Special Department of Human Rights (*Sedh*) and the Special Department of Policies for Promoting Racial Equality (*Seppir*).

** The hyphen indicates that the Program continued functioning until the end of 2006.

An example of the first type of program is *Prouni*, which provides higher education scholarships for low income students, blacks and Indians. An example of the second type are the Educating in Diversity Project and the Education Program for Diversity and Citizenship, aimed at teachers and students in basic education, with whom themes and questions relating to cultural diversity and fighting discrimination and exclusion are discussed. There are also programs that work with both action possibilities, like the Connecting Knowledge and

Uniafro programs that are directed at specific audiences, but that propose a rethink of the relations that are established between ethnic and cultural groups in society.

One observes that, so far, there are few programs that, as a priority, manage to develop actions that link together the various groups of people. Most of the programs do their work separately, emphasizing their own specific nature, even though the activities they are involved with are similar. This is in part understandable when one considers the peculiarities of the historical process of discrimination against women, compared with blacks, handicapped people or other groups. The degree to which these segments are socially mobilized also has an influence on the way in which public authorities respond to their demands.

However, if one of the objectives of MEC is to build a new orientation in its educational policies in such a way as to include diversity, as it stated when it set up *Secad*, for example, fragmentation and the non-articulation that exists between the various programs that have been created makes generalization of this new perspective of diversity difficult. Such difficulties may indicate also the existence of different educational projects that are in dispute within the Ministry itself, which reinforces the need to analyze this administrative instance in the light of its internal contradictions and the political negotiation processes that have led to its current configuration.

In terms of betting on the "transversalization" of diversity, one observes that there are limits to this strategy. If, on the one hand, there is a partnership between specific departments, such as Secad and Seesp with Sesu, on the other, the SEB, the department responsible for the whole of basic education, has only one program directed towards cultural diversity. Unlike the others, this department sees diversity policies as antagonistic or competing with educational policies of social inclusion. Of all the diversity programs/actions identified, the vast majority are concentrated in two departments; Higher Education and *Secad*, which are responsible for 9 and 11 programs/projects, respectively. In terms of inter-ministerial actions they are favored partners of the Special Department for Promoting Racial Equality and the Special Human Rights Department.

Distribution of the actions across the different levels of education emphasizes a specific level, that of higher education, even though it has been increasing the number of actions in basic education. The programs for access to higher education basically follow three lines: programs for granting scholarships and/or funding, such as the University for All Program (Prouni) and the Student Funding Program (Fies); programs for improving studies,

such as pre-university entrance exam courses and the Tutoria Program; and projects for setting aside a percentage of places in public higher education institutions, such as is proposed by PL 3.647/04.

With regard to remaining in higher education the actions cover basically the awarding of scholarships linked to participation in programs and projects that promote reflection about diversity policies, such as Uniafro, Conexões de Saberes [Knowledge Connections] and the Milton Santos Project for Access to Higher Education (Promisaes). Also prominent are training programs for teachers, covering themes such as indigenous education, gender and sexual orientation education and ethnic-racial relations, like the Support Program for Higher Education and Teacher Training for Indians (Prolind) and the Education for Diversity and Citizenship Program.

Anther aspect to be considered has to do with the degree of institutionality in the programs implemented, in other words, in the normative machinery that provides support for them and guarantees their continuation in the medium term, i.e. beyond the term of the current government. The transformation of these programs into laws that are passed in the National Congress may be understood as being a strong measure of their institutionality.

Of all the programs we analyzed, however, few assumed this characteristic. Such is the case of Fies, Prouni and the Diversity in University Program. Furthermore, not all the programs are included in the Multiannual Plan (PPA) of the Ministry of Education, i.e. they are not included in the actions and targets defined for the Ministry as a whole, nor have specific funds been earmarked for carrying them out. Another part of the programs functions through public bid notices that are published annually and open to certain institutions. There are also those that function by entering into agreement directly with institutions or organizations that will carry them out, as is the case with Knowledge Connections.

Analysis of the diversity programs/projects and actions that have been developed under the auspices of the MEC allows us to observe that if there is one characteristic that is common to all, it is precisely their plurality, which forces us to talk about "diversities". There is, therefore, no single concept of diversity to guide the federal government's educational policies; the term is still polyssemic.

The many meanings of diversity

Concern with the question of diversity was a constant in the institutional design of the Ministry of Education and in its educational policies throughout the first administration of President Lula. However, a variety of meanings has been attributed to the term that are not necessarily identical or complementary. There are at least three different and sometimes contradictory meanings associated with diversity in this context: social inclusion, affirmative action and difference policies.

The discourses around what is called "social inclusion", along with its category peer, exclusion, have been occupying increasingly more space in the literature about public policies in Brazil, especially since the 1990s. But its spread led to the indiscriminate and undefined use of this category, so varied are the meanings attributed to them (Kuenzer, 2006). Among these it is interesting for us to distinguish two specific ways of interpreting the social inclusion discourse.

Taking as a point of reference the Marxist analysis, inclusion/exclusion are understood as two sides of the same coin, both forming part of capitalist production. It starts with the assumption that in this system "all forms of inclusion are always subordinate and allowed because they meet the demands of the accumulation process." (Kuenzer, 2006, p. 5). In other words, "the circle between exclusion and subordinate inclusion is a possibility condition of the processes and the production and reproduction of capital and is a logical and necessary constituent part of modern capitalist societies" (Oliveira, apud Kuenzer, 2006, p. 5).

Another way of understanding social inclusion is linked to the Anglo-Saxon intellectual tradition, particularly the North American tradition, with its social planning and resolution of government problems. Starting from a criticism of the analysis of the State dealt with in a generalist and monolithic way, an attempt is made to give emphasis to more empirical production directed at the so-called public policies, understood as being an analysis of the "State in action". From this perspective government problems may be resolved by using knowledge and social engineering, by means of what has been called "problem solving" (Melo, 1999; Popkewitz, Lindblad, 2001).

In the case of the MEC programs that were analyzed the idea of social inclusion as it appears in official documents is more associated with this second perspective. At the discursive level there is no criticism whatsoever of the role or character of the State; analysis of the situation of education in the country is carried out almost independently of any analysis

of the State. In the Ministry of Education concern with social inclusion is linked with social policies of a compensatory nature that are aimed at people who live in poverty or in a "risk" situation. This starts from an understanding that access to education has a fundamental role to play in easing or reducing social inequality.

With regard to diversity policies the focus on social inclusion seems to be associated with a defense of what is presented as policies of a universal nature, which adopt criteria like income or schooling for selecting those who will benefit from government programs. An attempt is made to differentiate these policies form the so-called policies of a particularist stamp, which are identified with affirmative action policies or difference policies because they use criteria like ethnic-racial belonging, gender and gender identity for defining the groups that benefit. However, this distinction is inaccurate. As Norberto Bobbio recalls, with the rise of social rights in modern society the notion of universality, as celebrated in the liberal declaration of rights is already changing:

> ...universality (or indistinction, or non-discrimination) in the attribution and eventual enjoyment of the rights of freedom does not apply to social rights, or to political rights, before which individuals are only generically, but not specifically equal.... This means that in the affirmation and recognition of political rights one cannot fail to take into account certain differences that justify non-equal treatment. In the same way, and with greater evidence, this occurs in the field of social rights. (Bobbio, 1992, p. 71).

This means that both social inclusion and affirmative action policies use non-universal mechanisms of positive discrimination. In what way, then, are they different?

Unlike social inclusion policies the so-called affirmative action or positive discrimination policies start from an understanding that the poverty and/or inequality situation in which certain social groups, such as blacks, Indians and women, find themselves cannot be only attributed to individuals in isolation, or to the exploitation resulting from capitalist production. It is believed that contemporary forms of discrimination, which publish disparaging images of certain ethnic, racial or gender groups also contribute to the opportunistic inequalities that exist when it comes to access to goods and services in society. Originating in India and adopted by Europe and the United States affirmative action policies are understood as a legal improvement in a society whose values are based on the principle of equal opportunities in any competition between free individuals, thus justifying inequality in

treatment merely as a way of restoring such equality. They should, therefore, be temporary by nature, with restricted scope and operating within a restricted sphere (Guimarães, 1999, p.233).

It is worth mentioning the distinction made by William L. Taylor between the concepts of affirmative action and the policy of redress and redistribution. The idea of redress must include all members of the group that is prejudiced, as beneficiaries of the policies. On the other hand, redistribution, as a sufficient criterion, presupposes the socio-economic neediness of members of the group in question, regardless of the reasons for such neediness (Contins, Sant'Ana, 1996, p. 210).

Affirmative action is different from redress because it considers that belonging to a particular group that has been historically discriminated against is not sufficient for someone to benefit and that merit and qualification criteria must also be taken into consideration. It differentiates itself from redistributive policies by demanding that the socio-economic neediness of individuals be identified as a consequence of ethnic, racial, sexual and gender discrimination (Moehlecke, 2002).

Reference to conditions described as ethnic origin, race, sex and the definition of rights from belonging to a group, instead of being centered on an individual, are two more conflictive aspects raised by affirmative action policies. At this point it is of no interest to us to analyze the controversial debate that has sprung up around these policies. But it is worth observing that in the education policies formulated by the *MEC* there is still no in-depth knowledge of the subject. Affirmative actions are frequently associated exclusively with quota policies, whether they are social, ethnic/racial, gender or for the handicapped. At other times they are defined in such a way as to include any policy of social inclusion that is compensatory in nature.

As for "difference policies", they differentiate themselves from social inclusion policies and affirmative action, not because of their emphasis on particularism, as is generally argued, because all of them to differing degrees consider certain forms of particularity. What is new in difference policies resides in the demand for equal recognition of the right of different cultures to express themselves and to operate in the public sphere. Since the 1970s that which had been attributed since modernity to the private sphere in terms of the right of each individual to choose their own values and their own way of living well, has been claimed as a collective right in public life.

In the policies and programs of the Ministry of Education the idea of difference appears to be linked to valuing the diversity of the people and cultures present in our country, which is in contrast to the homogenizing view of Brazilian society. A study by the Economic and Applied Research Institute (Ipea), a federal government body, shows that difference policies are understood as those that try and fight the dissemination of the stereotypes and prejudice that are directed at groups that have been historically treated as inferior in our society. This is done by positively valuing their identity and the ethnic-cultural plurality that characterizes Brazilian society. In the case of these policies, repressive, punitive or compensatory actions on the part of the State are not appropriate, but persuasive measures that develop training and re-education do (Jaccoud, Beghin, 2002, p. 41-42).

But in the documents of MEC we find two different meanings associated with difference policies that may be defined as both benign and critical, in line with the meanings attributed to these terms by Moreira (2002).

The first meaning starts from the generic verification that humanity is in itself diverse, that nature is diverse, that cultures and people are diverse and that this should be something valued and celebrated. Brazil is seen as almost unique in the world, because of the broad multiplicity of the groups and races that live and coexist here. In this concept difference appears as something natural, as a given of the reality, and starting from which attempts are made to encourage tolerance and peaceful coexistence between the different cultures. When we celebrate our different origins and the plurality of cultures that mark our society, but fail to consider the unequal power relations that were established between them historically and that continue defining the different opportunities that must be expressed in the public arena, this concept is criticized for its frank, somewhat innocent view of diversity. This way of perceiving difference is identified, for example, as a reworking of the myth of Brazilian racial democracy. The official celebrations on the occasion of the 500 years of the "discovery" of Brazil illustrate this perception well.

On the other hand the concern of the critical sense attributed to difference is to examine the very process by which this difference arises, by questioning the power relations that permeate it, with the idea of elevating the person called "other", "different", "inferior" to the status of individual, by affirming the specific identities of these groups, as an instrument of political struggle.

Even though this perception of cultural diversity as a right to be different is the viewpoint put forward by the vast majority of the social movements, in the Ministry of Education the three meanings of cultural diversity are simultaneously present and creating a permanent tension between their policy guidelines. The emphases in the way that diversity is understood and dealt with depend on the area or department involved.

Secad, when faced with the objectives that were attributed to it and the people chosen to direct each of the coordinating offices that have strong links with the social movements of the areas with which they work, was the department that brought to the fore the question of diversity in a more explicit manner, with its critical viewpoint of difference policies. *Sesu*, because it works specifically with higher education, reinforced the idea of diversity as a policy of inclusion and/or affirmative action in its programs. The SEB, on the other hand, which has responsibility for formulating policies for the whole of basic education, in its documents and programs works mainly with the idea of social inclusion and difference as valuing and tolerating cultural diversity.

Given what has been said, analysis of the policies of the federal government and the Ministry of Education, starting with a cohesive and homogenous vision of the guidelines that are given to it, is a methodological perspective that is limited by internal and external disputes, caused by the definition of the meaning attributed to diversity policies. In the case of these policies, in particular, the mark of which has been their controversial character, there is no single, coherent guideline, but multiple ways of understanding them in constant tension and negotiation.

CONSTRUCTING PATHS TO EQUALITY IN DIVERSITY?

Is it possible to say that the perspective of diversity has been guiding the way in which the Ministry of Education defines and implements its educational policies? There are various dimensions to be observed when it comes to outlining considerations on this question.

In the first place it is noted that the theme of diversity is included in a considerable number of the Ministry's programs and projects and has been instrumental in the new institutional design of some of its departments, which is something that did not exist in the previous government. However, within the MEC, programs are still concentrated in two departments, Secad and Sesu. So far it has not been possible to achieve the objective of

"tranversalizing" the perspective of diversity to all the Ministry's departments, or developing programs and projects directed at the diversity *public* and *themes* in an articulated way. Prevailing specific actions are directed at black and Indian people, women or the handicapped.

In several documents from the MEC, specifically those referring to Secad and Sesu, there is a recurring emphasis on the need to break with the dualism that is present in the debates on diversity and that place universal policies and particularist policies, or social criteria and ethnic-cultural criteria in opposition to each other. Value is given to an articulation between expansion policies and improvements in the quality of education in Brazil for the whole population and to policies directed at the most vulnerable and discriminated against social groups, as a guarantee of everyone's right to education. But if on the one hand the Ministry is concerned with indicating that these two orientations are not in themselves antagonistic, on the other one notices that it is difficult to turn them into a reality in the design and implementation of educational policies and programs, especially because of the different meanings that are attributed to them.

At the end of the first administration of President Lula it is impossible to say that there has been a definition of a single, clear and coherent orientation of what is understood by diversity policy and its implications for the MEC's educational policies. It has to be pointed out that the diversity demand does not come from government, but from markedly plural social movements. How, therefore, can these various demands be understood? Is the concept of diversity appropriate for combining such, at times, different groups and demands?

The multiple meanings attributed to the word "diversity" within the scope of the Ministry can be seen in a positive light, to the extent that they benefit from an understanding of a Brazilian society that tends to identify diversity as a positive feature that constitutes our country and that, therefore, unites generally fragmented social demands. But this strategy may sap the strength behind the demands of social movements and alter the direction of their proposals, thus removing their unique qualities.

Going further, it must be seen that the variety of meanings associated with the word "diversity" expresses, at the extreme, the internal and external disputes that exist in government when it comes to defining educational projects, by proposing different ways of responding to the demands of social movements in recognition of their multiple diversities.

Perhaps the best place for accompanying this movement of centrifugal forces that operate in the definition of diversity policies in the educational area is the National Congress. This is particularly so when it comes to the difficult processes associated with the passing of legislative bills presented by the Executive Branch, as is the case with PL 3.647/04 (quota policy in higher education) and PL 7.200/06 (reform of university education).

The fragility and ambiguity that are characteristic of public action are also observed in MEC's attempts to institutionalize its programs and projects that are articulated around the various diversities. The erratic character of the majority of the programs, most of which do not get past the Legislative Branch, means that they largely depend on the people who are responsible for managing them, which creates uncertainty as to their continuity, especially on the part of the institutions that are responsible for carrying them out.

It also has to be considered that despite the fact that diversity policies have achieved greater visibility during the Lula government, and particularly in the Ministry of Education, and even in terms of the new institutional designs that have been created, the diversity concepts that guide their actions are still very disparate and appropriated in a fragmented way by the departments and other ministries and are the object of intense internal and external dispute. The *MEC* does not have a single, coherent position about diversity that it can use for guiding all its actions. However, given the different demands it tries to meet it has to be asked if this is a desirable target. So far the idea of diversity has served as a great "umbrella" concept for the government in its various negotiation processes with pressure groups. It has to be assessed whether this strategy will be sufficient for continuing with this agenda in the next administration, particularly as far as concerns the support it receives from social movements.

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