

Victory of tradition or resistance of innovation: the teaching of history between the BNCC, the PNLD and the School¹

Vitória da tradição ou resistência da inovação: o Ensino de História entre a BNCC, o PNLD e a Escola

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ABSTRACT

Based on the premise that between the prescribed curriculum, the edited curriculum and the curriculum in action occur approximations and distances whose contours escape any form of prior control, we focus, in this study, on the Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) [National Common Curriculum Base], the Programa Nacional do Livro e do Material Didático (PNLD) [National Book and Teaching Material Program] and the school contexts in which such curricular policies are carried out. The approach is characterized as bibliographic and documentary research, in which it focuses specifically on the curricular component History in the Final Years of Elementary School. The results allow us to conclude that the homologated version of BNCC has close relations with the historiographical tradition that favors a chronological, linear, quadripartite/tripartite and eurocentric approach. By adopting as one of the basic procedures the identification of events considered important in the history of the west, it impedes access to other strategies of selection and organization of historical knowledge. The PNLD, in turn, seems to assume the role of guardian of the curriculum prescribed at BNCC, ensuring the supply of books and teaching materials that tend to impose on teachers and students a reference matrix decontextualized

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of the school reality, reducing possibilities for collective constructions in the face of local and regional singularities. However, it is in the curriculum in action, in the daily life of the school, in the practices of its main actors, that lies the impulse of creation, innovation and resistance.

Keywords: BNCC. PNLD. School. History. Curriculum.

RESUMO

Assentadas na premissa de que entre o currículo prescrito, o currículo editado e o currículo em ação ocorrem aproximações e distanciamentos cujos contornos escapam a quaisquer formas de controle prévio, debruçamos, neste estudo, sobre a Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC), o Programa Nacional do Livro e do Material Didático (PNLD) e os contextos escolares em que se efetivam tais políticas curriculares. A abordagem se caracteriza como pesquisa bibliográfica e documental, em que se focaliza especificamente o componente curricular História nos Anos Finais do Ensino Fundamental. Os resultados permitem concluir que a versão homologada da BNCC guarda estreitas relações com a tradição historiográfica que privilegia uma abordagem cronológica, linear, quadripartite/tripartite e eurocêntrica. Ao adotar como um dos procedimentos básicos a identificação dos eventos considerados importantes na história do ocidente, obstaculiza-se o acesso a outras estratégias de seleção e organização do conhecimento histórico. O PNLD, por sua vez, parece assumir o papel de guardião do currículo prescrito na BNCC, zelando pela oferta de livros e materiais didáticos que tendem a impor aos professores e estudantes uma matriz de referência descontextualizada da realidade da escola, reduzindo possibilidades de construções coletivas frente às singularidades locais e regionais. Contudo, é no currículo em ação, no cotidiano da escola, nas práticas de seus principais atores, que reside o impulso da criação, da inovação e da resistência.

Palavras-chave: BNCC. PNLD. Escola. História. Currículo.

Introduction

On December 20, 2017, through CNE/CP nº 2 Resolution, the Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) [National Common Curriculum Base] was homologated in Brazil. As disclosed on the portal of the Ministério da Educação (MEC) [Ministry of Education], it should “be respected obligatorily throughout the stages and their modalities in the scope of Basic Education” (BRASIL, 2017a, our translation). It is also announced that it will be up to the

National Education Council to conduct the negotiations for its implementation and nine documents are available that make up the process, “from the arrival of the BNCC to the National Education Council until the publication of the Resolution” (BRASIL, 2017a, our translation).

In the year following the Resolution, MEC broadcasted propaganda (BRASIL, 2018a) in the big national media, showing children from five Brazilian regions who, from their homes, prepare and go to school. In the text, narrated concomitantly with the images, it states:

For the first time, Brazil will have a Common National Curriculum Base! The document is democratic and respects differences. With the base, all students in the country, from public or private schools, will have the same learning rights. [The class begins, and the teacher/the speech] Today, the lesson is about citizenship. [The narrator continues] That is good. If the basis of education is the same, so will the opportunities (BRASIL, 2018a, our translation).

In this propaganda, in just over 30 seconds, the Ministry of Education clearly exposes how far away it is from the royal school. Throughout the work, the images, characters, and text refer to representations about schools, students, families, teachers, classroom, content, curriculum, learning, school transport, which portray the conceptions in which, in short, it supports the idea of mandatory BNCC, in its final version. This document presents itself to society as the homogenizing ruler, with the power to equalize the profound differences that plague Brazil. The way the BNCC was reported through the media, to transmit a message to the lay population, is a field to be studied, whose results reveal conceptions and enrich the thinking about the Brazilian public school (BRESSANIN, 2018).

What the MEC’s advertising (BRASIL, 2018a) does not reveal is that the construction of BNCC was held amid a conflagrated arena, which is salutary since one of the few possible consensuses in the field of specialized literature is the concept of curriculum as a constant field dispute. However, to understand the curriculum in this perspective when it comes to Brazil after 2016 is a theme that expands beyond the educational scope, and in this sense, the history of the construction of BNCC is marked by subtle ruptures before the democratic state. The approval of the document in 2017, in a streamlined way, without the part corresponding to high school, and without considering requests from various sectors to expand the debate, portrays that over the years the conception of what

should be a common national basis was distancing itself from the provisions of the Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988), the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (LDB) [National Education Guidelines and Bases Law] (BRASIL, 1996), the Plano Nacional de Educação (PNE) [National Education Plan] (BRASIL, 2014) and in the Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais [National Curriculum Guidelines], culminating with the elaboration of a prescriptive curriculum document, defining content to be taught and skills to be developed, even though the MEC understands and defends that the BNCC is not curriculum (AGUIAR, 2018).

We can state, in the wake of the announcement by Alice Casimiro Lopes (2018), how significant was the volume of documents that standardized the curricular issue in Brazil in recent decades. Resuming the history of the construction of each one of them, we come across scenarios of intense struggles, accompanied by constant agreements, and so we continued writing the history of Brazilian school education. It happens that, after 2016, the democratic society that we are supposed to be, a cradle for struggles-agreements-struggles-agreements, was radically altered with the dismissal of the elected president. What has been drawn in the country since then is a struggle without the possibility of agreements, because we are operating with groups that define themselves holders of absolute truths around several issues, including about what is a school, how, and what should be taught in this place.

It is from this context that we weave the approach on the BNCC, with a defined focus on the curriculum component History for the Final Years of Elementary School. We aim to address the specificities that we identified in BNCC from the concept of a curriculum (prescribed, edited, and in action) in close relation to the Programa Nacional do Livro e do Material Didático (PNLD) [National Book and Teaching Material Program]. The choice by the PNLD is justified by the fact that this public policy went through the preparation of the cited curricular documents and from them received contributions that defined and redefined the various notices that standardized the production of textbooks in the country in recent decades.

The textbook can also be understood as a curricular orientation, since it embodies the curricular prescriptions, as stated by Franco, Silva Junior and Guimarães (2018, p. 1028, our translation):

The first notice of the PNLD of the “the Base time” was published in July 2017, that is, before the approval of the BNCC that took place on December 20, 2017, forcing authors and editors to (re)elaborate, adapt the collections, according to a Public policy document in the process of elaboration and discussion.

Also, according to the authors,

[...] the BNCC fulfills a radical role of external regulation, because it determines what will be taught (the contents), how it will be taught (the methodologies), when (the ordering of school time), what and how it will be evaluated, finally what should and can be taught and learned (FRANCO; SILVA JUNIOR; GUIMARÃES, 2018, p. 1032, our translation).

The methodological approach adopted in this research is based on bibliographic studies and document analysis, in particular the BNCC of the area of History for the Final Years of Elementary School, the PNLD 2020 Notice, and the PNLD 2020 Textbook Guide, of the curriculum component History.

The structure of the article consists of four sections, in addition to this first in which the introduction is presented. In the second section, we explain the concept of prescribed curriculum and, taking as reference the BNCC document of the area of History for the Final Years of Elementary School, we highlight the main propositions and try to point out what is new about the pedagogical and historiographical tradition. In the third section, having as its axis the concept of edited curriculum, we established a comparative analysis between the constant in BNCC and PNLD, taking the Notice and the Guide to Textbooks of PNLD 2020 – Area of History, as basic documents. Following, constituting the fourth section, we discuss the curriculum in action, willing to understand what perspectives can be announced for the implementation of the BNCC proposal in the daily life of schools. We finalize the approach with the fifth section, entitled Final Indignations, in which we expose concerns with current public policies that, in our understanding, dilute the few advances that Brazilian society has managed to achieve, in relation to public school. On the other hand, we also use the thread of hope to weave tomorrow, because we learned from Paulo Freire (2011, p. 11, our translation) that “in the borderline situations, beyond which we find the ‘unedited viable’, sometimes noticeable, sometimes not, we find reasons to be for both positions: the hopeful and the hopeless”.

Paths of the prescribed curriculum: a look at the BNCC

In his studies, Sacristán (2013a) announces a procedural view of the curriculum that includes three main plans: the aims, objectives, or motives; the actions and activities; and the results or real effects of the educational project. Such plans unfold in several dimensions, such as official/prescribed curriculum, interpreted curriculum, completed curriculum, received curriculum, evaluated curriculum. We can still talk about edited curriculum (BENITO, 2016), null curriculum (MEZA; CEPEDA, 2001), hidden curriculum (SILVA, 2010).

Among these numerous ways of conceiving and addressing the topic of the curriculum, in this section, we will focus on the document called *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* [National Common Curriculum Base], understood as an expression of an education project for the Brazilian nation, with normative and regulatory function. As visible curricular text (SACRISTÁN, 2013a), this project has been termed the idealized curriculum, explicitly targeted curriculum, official curriculum, formal curriculum, prescribed curriculum.

The Brazilian BNCC consists of a 600-page document, structured in five parts, named (BRASIL, 2017b): Introdução, Estrutura da BNCC, Etapa da Educação Infantil, Etapa do Ensino Fundamental, Etapa do Ensino Médio [Introduction, Structure of BNCC, Stage of Early Childhood Education, Stage of Elementary School, Stage of High School]. Our focus of the study is on the items (4.4.2.) História [History]; Competências específicas de História para o Ensino Fundamental [Specific History Competencies for Elementary School] (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 397-402); (4.4.2.2.) História no Ensino Fundamental – Anos Finais: unidades temáticas, objetos de conhecimento e habilidades [History in Elementary School – Final Years: thematic units, objects of knowledge, and skills] (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 416-433, our translation).

In this *corpus*, we seek to highlight the main propositions concerning the selected historical knowledge and the cognitive operations, in the effort to point out what can be characterized as innovation, concerning the current historiographical and pedagogical assumptions in the field of History Teaching. Here we use the premise brought by Sacristán (2013b, p. 27, our translation), when he states that the entire curriculum text, although translated, interpreted, assumed or subverted by readers, “it is important, as it disseminates the codes about what culture should be in schools, making them public”. Let’s see, then, what codes are announced for school history in the Final Years of Elementary School.

First, on the horizon of a positive ideology, we identify the theoretical-methodological assumptions that guide the proposal of the objects of knowledge and skills. Although they are not named in this way in the curricular text, we find

the following assumptions of historical formation: (1) the past-present relationship is guiding the teaching-learning dynamics, privileging a past that dialogues with the present time (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 397); (2) History is understood as construction and dispute for meaning, “it is the correlation of forces, of confrontations, and of the battle for the production of senses and meanings, which are constantly reinterpreted by different social groups and their demands” (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 397, our translation); (3) on the historical narrative, it is argued that an object only becomes a document when a narrator gives it meaning and, through it, expresses the dynamics of the life of societies (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 397); (4) the treatment of history is done with different sources and types of documents, because “the records and traces left by the individuals [...] carry in themselves the human experience” (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 398, our translation); (5) the dynamics of the study of history is conceived in concentric circles – I, Other, We –, beginning by the subject, enlarging itself to the other (different or similar), moving on to other peoples and, finally, to the world (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 398); (6) the capacity for communication, dialogue and argumentation constitutes a tool to respectfully deal with the plurality, to face problems, tensions, and conflicts, to overcome contradictions of the world lived (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 398); (7) work with history can lead students and teachers to develop “historian attitude” and to produce knowledge at school level (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 398); (8) cognitive operations to stimulate historical thinking to comprise “the processes of identification, comparison, contextualization, interpretation, and analysis of an object” (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 399, our translation); (9) plurality and cultural diversity figure especially in the approaches related to the history of indigenous and African peoples (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 401).

The realization of these assumptions of students’ historical formation would occur through three basic procedures: (a) the identification of events considered important in the history of the West, ordered chronologically and located in the geographic space; (b) by the selection, understanding and reflection on the meanings of the production, circulation, and use of documents (material or immaterial); (c) by the interpretation of different versions of the same phenomenon, with a view to the elaboration of own propositions (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 417).

What can be deduced so far is that this third version of BNCC has close relations with the historiographical tradition that favors a chronological, linear, juxtaposed approach from the past to the present, quadripartite/tripartite, eurocentric. While announcing that the past-present relationship is guiding the study, by adopting as one of the basic procedures the identification of events considered important in the history of the West, chronologically and linearly, ends up restricting other possibilities of selection and organization of historical knowledge, strengthening a eurocentric perspective. This normative becomes clearer when one

looks at the thematic units and objects of knowledge, which boil down to a table of contents very similar to the summary of textbooks of previous decades.

In this version of BNCC the ambition to study the whole history, from the caves to the third millennium, or from the origins of man to the digital age prevails, paraphrasing the title of well-known didactic collections. No cutting and selection of content operation is visualized, which opens space for other thematic and interpretative possibilities. This is explained verbatim in the curriculum document, when the chronological perspective is announced as a privileged form of memory recording and the “selection of historical events consolidated in contemporary historiographic culture” (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 416, our translation).

The treatment of the so-called “cultural diversity” develops in the same direction, prioritizing ethnocentric, heteronormative approaches of the white man. Notwithstanding compliance with the legislation on education for ethnic-racial relations, notably Laws 10,639/2003 (BRASIL, 2003) and 11,645/2008 (BRASIL, 2008), the curriculum clearly announces the place of the appendix of indigenous peoples, African and African descendants occupy in the course of Western history:

The relevance of the history of these human groups lies in the possibility for students to understand the role of the alterities present in Brazilian society, to commit themselves to them and, still, to realize that there are other production benchmarks, circulation, and transmission of knowledge, which can be intertwined with those considered established at formal spaces of knowledge production (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 401, our translation).

If they are “other references” that intersect with the “consecrated ones”, it is an approach that is not the main one.

Regarding gender discussions, these make up the so-called null curriculum, that is, they are absent from the curricular proposal of History. When searching for the descriptor “*gênero*” [gender], more than 400 occurrences are visualized along with the 600 pages of BNCC. However, these occurrences deal with textual, discursive, literary, artistic, oral, written, digital, epistolary, journalistic, narrative, secondary, multisemiotic, hypermedia, normative, narrative, musical, among others. In the proposal of History for the Final Years of Elementary School there are only two mentions of the subject of women in history, one in the sixth year, pointing out “The role of women in Greece and Rome, and in the medieval period” (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 420, our translation) and another in the ninth year, which proposes the study of the “Anarchism and female protagonism” (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 428, our translation). References to LGBTQIA+ populations

or propositions to combat gender-based violence are also virtually absent from the History proposal, with only one mention in the 9th grade, when presenting the EF09HI26 ability (BRASIL, 2017b, p. 431).

In the structuring of BNCC, it is proposed a direct correlation between the objects of knowledge and the skills be developed, through codes. It is known that this proposition fulfills the function of supporting the edited curriculum (textbook) and the evaluated curriculum (standardized tests, Brazilian high school national exam, etc.). To each object of knowledge corresponds a skill, so that in the 6th grade there are 19 abilities, in the 7th grade there are 27 abilities, and in the 9th grade there are 36. We seek to analyze which cognitive operations these 99 skills require of students, over the four years that make up the Final Years of Elementary School.

TABLE 1 – STUDENTS’ REQUIRED SKILLS IN THE FINAL YEARS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL²

SKILLS	6th grade	7th grade	8th grade	9th grade	TOTAL
Identify	7	5	13	13	38
Analyze	1	4	2	5	12
Describe	3	3		5	11
Discuss	1	1	2	6	10
Characterize	2	2	2	2	8
Relate	-	-	1	4	5
Explain	1	1	1	-	3
Know	1	-	2	-	3
Compare	-	1	-	1	2
Recognize	-	-	1	-	1
Conceptualize	1	-	-	-	1
Differentiate	1	-	-	-	1
Associate	1	-	-	-	1
Establishing causal relations	-	-	1	-	1
Formulate questions	-	-	1	-	1
Apply	-	-	1	-	1
TOTAL	19	17	27	36	99

SOURCE: Authors’ elaboration from BNCC (BRASIL, 2017b).

² It is necessary to clarify that we stopped in the first verb of each skill, disregarding the situations in which two verbs are indicated in the same ability, how to identify and analyze, or describe and discuss, for example.

Note that the predominantly required skills of students are those that provide less complex cognitive operations, such as identifying, describing, and characterizing, totaling 57 out of the 99 requirements. In addition to these, there are some generic skills, such as discussing, knowing, recognizing (14 occurrences). Skills that require more sophisticated thought operations, such as analyzing, relating, explaining, comparing, conceptualizing, differentiating, associating, establishing causal relationships, formulating questions, and applying, have reduced presence in the skill set, comprising only 28 occurrences, less than one-third of the total. We conclude this section by affirming our understanding that the curricular proposal prescribed in the BNCC is configured in what Sacristán (2013b, p. 27, our translation) calls a regressive text, which “even says to the ‘readers’ something about a ‘promised land’, but simply reaffirms the ‘traditional’ tradition – the expression is valid because there are also traditions of progress”. The question now is to verify what effects this regressive text can have on the edited curriculum and the resume in action, a task that we will dedicate ourselves to in the two subsequent sections.

Paths of the edited curriculum: a look at the PNLD

For many decades, until the approval of the BNCC, the textbook took the place of edited curriculum, in the absence of an official national curriculum. According to Benito (2016, p. 45, our translation), the textbook, although it does not configure the entire school program, is a form of the materialization of the edited curriculum, “the printed version of the vulgate in which the normative curriculum is translated and the proposal of knowledge and actions that usually guide the practice of teaching in a large number of schools”.

Through this meaning, we will focus our eyes on two basic documents of the PNLD – the Call Notice of PNLD 2018, Final Years of Elementary Education (BRASIL, 2018b) and the PNLD 2020 Textbook Guide: History (BRASIL, 2019) – to analyze how the curriculum prescribed in the BNCC is operated within the scope of the PNLD, thus giving rise to the curriculum edited in the Didactic Book of History.

The Notice of PNLD 2020 (BRASIL, 2018b) contains about 30 mentions to the BNCC, showing the expectation of full alignment between documents. In numerous excerpts of the Notice is established that the textbook will be evaluated in line with the competences and skills defined in the BNCC, and that will be excluded didactic works that, among other criteria, do not

present an “approach capable of contributing to the attainment of the objects of knowledge and their respective abilities disposed in BNCC” (BRASIL, 2018b, p. 39, our translation). It is also determined that “works must take care, particularly, for the presence and approach of the objects of knowledge aligned to the skills of each curricular component present there” (BRASIL, 2018b, p. 42, our translation). It is noted, verbatim, that the thematic units of the Base should not necessarily serve as a criterion for the elaboration of the work, however, paradoxically, it is obligated to “contemplate all objects of knowledge and skills constant in the BNCC” (BRASIL, 2018b, p. 42, our translation). In the same direction, the guidelines announced at the beginning of each volume of the Student’s Book and in the Teacher’s Manual should, among others, “clarify the correspondence of the content with the objects of knowledge and skills of BNCC” (BRASIL, 2018b, p. 43, our translation).

In PNLD 2020 Textbook Guide – History (BRASIL, 2019), referring to the Final Years of Elementary School, we found 136 mentions of the BNCC document. A long stretch of the Guide is occupied with the reproduction of the Notice, emphasizing this close link between the BNCC and the PNLD. It is emphatically emphasized that works that do not include **all** the objects of knowledge and that do not contribute adequately to the development of **all** the general and specific skills included in the BNCC will be excluded. Also elucidative of this link is the reproduction of the evaluation form, which contains 47 pages and presents an extensive checklist whose meaning is to verify the compatibility between the BNCC, and the didactic collection submitted for evaluation. In this endeavor, each item, each thematic unit, each legislation, each object of knowledge, and the respective skill code contained in the Base text, is contrasted with the textbooks evaluated.

The conclusion of this intimate relationship established between the prescribed curriculum and the edited curriculum is the preparation of a fertile ground for the evaluated curriculum, especially in the context of large-scale evaluation. The regulatory power of this curricular policy goes far beyond the purpose of establishing a national education project, insofar as it is managerial, homogenizing, and servile to external evaluation processes. The didactic materials, thus, promote a kind of bridge between the prescribed curriculum and the evaluated curriculum, which tend to impose on teachers and students a reference matrix decontextualized from the reality of the school, reducing possibilities of collective constructions in the face of local and regional singularities, cultures, identities, subjectivities and community demands (HYPOLITO, 2010).

The text of the PNLD 2020 Textbook Guide contains observations in which the evaluators indicate, subtly or explicitly way, the limits of the link between the two curricular policies. Regarding the emphasis on knowledge objects (contents), it is noted that these only gain meaning if they provoke reflections with the present time and contribute to autonomous, fair, and ethical decision-making (BRASIL, 2019). Furthermore, they invite the teacher to “interfere in the chronology and historical facts selected in the collection, according to what it seems appropriate and necessary while remaining in line with the BNCC proposal” (BRASIL, 2019, p. 6, our translation). Regarding the predominance of skills of less complexity, such as identification and description, emphatically present in the activities and evaluation proposals of the collections, warn the teacher about the need to extrapolate the limits of memorization of information and extend the traditional milestones of the discipline (BRASIL, 2019). The evaluators also denounce the limited presence, in the collections, of the “skills of discussing concepts, comparing and differentiating, confronting different historical interpretations, assessing impacts of a historical process or event” (BRASIL, 2019, p. 26, our translation).

The notion of time, in turn, summarized to the cyclical and linear dimension in the curricular text, needs to be faced by the teacher as a complex category, social and cultural experience that has its centrality in the subject (BRASIL, 2019). In this direction, they warn the teacher about the quadripartite/tripartite conceptions that guide European/Brazilian history, respectively, and their markedly eurocentric character, which are preponderant characteristics in the didactic collections of the PNLD 2020 (BRASIL, 2019). In the themes related to the history and culture of indigenous, African and Afro-Brazilian peoples, the evaluators affirmed that the approved works “failed to advance in the treatment of these themes beyond what those approved in previous edicts advanced, driven by the requirements of Laws 10,639 of 2003 and 11,645 of 2008” (BRASIL, 2019, p. 23, our translation). Likewise, regarding gender themes, they verify the male protagonism in the approach of historical processes and the silencing of homoaffective relations and their meaning throughout history (BRASIL, 2019).

When one analyzes the two documents in the same perspective, as carried out so far, it is not surprising that the didactic collections remain within the parameters of the historiographic tradition and the mutualistic culture that have characterized them for decades, as edited curriculum. It is not from this BNCC that one can expect ruptures with the almost secular disciplinary canons, because, as Sacristán points out, in the regressive text there is not even an “utopian charge” (SACRISTÁN, 2013b, p. 24), not even “a promised land” (SACRISTÁN, 2013b, p. 27). Given this, what can we expect from the resume in action? Believing that the teacher is a “decisive mediator” (ACOSTA, 2013, p. 189) between the

prescribed curriculum and the real curriculum, how can he interpret the scores called BNCC and Textbook?

Curriculum Paths in Action: A Look at Teachers and Students in the Classroom

We understand the curriculum in action, in the wake of Sacristán (1998, 2013a), as what is effective of the proposed, of the interpreted, of the executed in practice. Recognizing the proposals as starting points, the author points out that it is in action, in practice, that what is established in the documents becomes reality, takes on meaning, and assumes a value, sometimes different from that desired by the proponents.

What would be the actions, the movements in the classroom, if the proposal for History Teaching in the Final Years of Elementary School is effective? Considering the actions presented in Table 1, it is inferred that the desired movement points to teachers and students as subjects receiving knowledge and performing actions cognitively based on the identification, description, and analysis of something already given. The establishment of causal relationships and the formulation of questions, for example, are skills contemplated only once. This is an important point to consider the priorities from which the BNCC, in its third version, was elaborated. To advance the hypotheses about what we can expect from the curriculum in action, especially in the area of History, and as the teacher will constitute his pedagogical work under the regency, or not, of BNCC and the textbook, it is convenient, in a few lines, outline a brief picture of the situation in which the history textbooks were found in 2016 and what reverberations were identified in the school's daily life. We do this because we consider that, if the prescribed happens in Brazilian schools, we will experience a regression of at least thirty years, regarding the construction of school historical knowledge.

Despite all the criticisms of the PNLD, among which the one that refers to the standardization of a book format and a knowledge to be taught, it is a fact the change identified in the textbooks of History towards a more plural, fair, and inclusive society. It is also true the change in the proposed activities that, over the years, brought the student closer to a more protagonist role in the search for knowledge, especially in the work of selection and analysis of sources. The dialogue with the surroundings, as the issues present in daily life, was widely demanded through the Notices and, although, with limitations, they were present

in textbooks. Year after year, the chapters of the books that mostly present the history to students from quadripartite/tripartite and without questions, were added “complementary texts”, “projects” and other proposals that point to a more investigative and questioning approach to history.

In action in the country, until 2016, were also public policies to encourage education, signaling promising horizons arising from the investment of pre-salt resources in teacher training, in public schools, in the production of teaching material, finally, in all aspects that are the basis for quality education. In schools, what became a curriculum in action in the field of History was strongly defined through the contents presented in the textbooks that were chosen by teachers amid a significant range of options. The problems have always been many, the questions, clashes, and disputes around the contents as well. Regarding large-scale evaluations, especially about the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)³, the students’ results did not advance at the speed desired by those who understand the improvement of the quality of education under the comparative bias between countries.

In 2014, a group of teachers invited by the MEC prepared a document that received the title of “*Direitos de Aprendizagem*” [Learning Rights] in order to meet the construction of a national education proposal. Macedo (2019, p. 47, our translation) acknowledges that “the choice of a curriculum guided by learning rights [...] was a demand for academic and social movements to distance the proposed language from testing”.

However, amid the political agreements that followed the 2014 presidential election, a direct relationship was established between the common national base and the large-scale evaluation policies. After 2016 it is identified greater approximation and establishment of partnerships with private sectors that were already in action in schools, with various projects that, most of them operate with the logic of offering proposals and materials ready for teachers and students to follow the routes in which the points of departure and arrival points for the construction of knowledge, the so-called structured teaching systems.

Therefore, the action of the teacher before the promulgation of the BNCC was carried out with a certain autonomy regarding the choice of textbooks; the

3 This is an international comparative study conducted triennially by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), with a view to providing information on the performance of students in the 15-year age group. With the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira* (INEP) [National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira] as the body responsible for planning and implementing evaluation in Brazil, the study assesses three domains – reading, mathematics and sciences – in all editions or cycles, in addition to assessing so-called “innovative domains”, such as Problem Solving, Financial Literacy and Global Competence.

routine of organization of the contents to be taught; the proposals coming from partnerships with private foundations, in parallel with the implementation of curricular guidelines of states and municipalities; to the remaining proposals of the *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* [National Curricular Parameters], among others. This all shows that the curriculum in action was not linked to a single formal origin. In this amalgam of situations, teachers decided “amid operating standards, curricular policies, government agency, tradition” (ACOSTA, 2013, p. 190, our translation). Notwithstanding MEC announce that the BNCC is not a mandatory curricular proposal, this can be easily contested, for example, to verify the rigidity imposed in the Notice of the PNLD 2020, as we saw earlier, as to full compliance with its themes, objects of knowledge and skills.

When dealing with the concept of curriculum in action, the BNCC document refers to the flexibility that can occur in schools when they put into development the Diversified Part that is guaranteed in the National Curriculum Guidelines. However, according to Macedo (2018), the conception presented in the BNCC differs considerably from the aspects that comprise the curriculum in action as that experienced in the daily life of schools. According to this author, in the BNCC proposal,

[...] the curriculum in action is a rereading of the formal curriculum that occurs at the time of its implementation. [...] the complementarity between prescribed curriculum and curriculum in action is of the order of the application, the Base will be implemented as curriculum in action (MACEDO, 2018, p. 30, our translation).

Resuming the reflection on what was happening in the country in terms of the curriculum in action in the area of History for the Final Years of Elementary School, before the BNCC, we were in full swing of questioning on issues such as: What can be considered a classic of knowledge? What is elected and who chooses what is defined as a patrimony of humanity? What selection criteria should be applied, given the vast amount of knowledge accumulated? Such questions refer to the approach of what to consider significant to be erected to the category of knowledge to be taught in school, the so-called “school content”, a tiny part of the knowledge collectively produced.

The choices made, decades after decades, about what to teach and how to teach history in school, and even about school design, is the product of a selective process of constant feedback. To this movement Forquin (1992, 1993) entitled “school culture” recognizing that the study of any aspect related to school needs

consider the *habitus* that prevents the perception of a school education vision formulated from the imposition of groups that ensure and legitimize certain knowledge to the detriment of knowledge from other groups.

The appreciation of school culture is also highlighted by Acosta (2013) when producing curricular documents, although in other terms. For this author, the task of educational authorities, managers, and editors, in the process of building proposals for the socialization of knowledge for all, which, in the last case, is intended to be organized in a curriculum, “it is to reproduce and not produce knowledge” and act “together as reconditioning agents” (ACOSTA, 2013, p. 190, our translation). However, this role can only be played if the teacher is understood as the main mediator in the construction of knowledge in the classroom. In this direction, Acosta (2013, p. 190, our translation) warns that, without having the school as a starting point, through political agreements, one can considerably change the interpretation of school reality and “the form and organization of knowledge”.

What is taught and learned in school are balanced choices between what society has preserved and what it has destroyed to preserve itself. Thus, the contradiction is present in all educational actions because these are situated between the need to solve, in a possible way, the equation between the legitimizing certain knowledge, which constitute and explain the society in which one lives, and legitimize the extermination of other knowledge by this same society, in this case, knowing that they may not be perceptible as important in a first reading. The first version of the BNCC recognized the importance of considering other stories that had not been elected as school content and reinterpreted the results of research in the field of History Teaching and in the historiographic field that recounted, from other voices, canonical processes of our history.

Acosta (2013, p. 191, our translation) understands that “teachers do politics from below or, in other words, break with the political line imposed from above, even if within certain limits”. The limits are identified, among others, in the school tradition that maintains various practices but also has room for innovations. From this perspective, the understanding of what will become of the school involves different interpretations about what is important to be raised to the category of “school content” because it is understood that it is an institution of teaching and learning knowledge – of all kinds and not only the so-called school –, in which the conflict between the old and the new is constantly present, characterizing the school space also as a space of struggle for power.

In the action, we understand that the proposed BNCC and that is materialized in the textbooks by imposition, does not open space for this game between tradition and innovation because it is too traditional. Sacristán (2013c, p. 262, our translation) collaborates to clarify our hypothesis, in these terms:

When it is said that the curriculum is “traditional” in a derogatory sense, we do not intend to undermine the cultural tradition or the contents, but to claim power, select other contents and develop them as ways to teach alternatives to traditionalists.

The BNCC does not allow room for teachers to exercise their power of choice, and this question can be understood in the context of the shift we are seeing towards a society in which freedom is not recognized as a delimit condition of democracy. In the approved version of BNCC, the removal of all content understood as controversial or sensitive, is representative of an idea of a school-based on the reproduction of knowledge and educator of subjects aware of what they were allowed to know and not interrogating actors about their own existence.

A curriculum composed of controversial topics with important implications on life or society, about which we can have different opinions and proposals that stimulate inquiry, is not the same as a curriculum in which we start from non-problematic content to learn them in a way not so alive (SACRISTÁN, 2013c, p. 263).

We are dealing with power and the school is a living institution. We ended the writing of this text amid a pandemic that has kept schools closed for more than six months in Brazil. And, keeping the necessary proportions, always necessary when speaking of a country of continental dimensions like Brazil, the challenge is reinvention in the way of teaching and on what to teach. In some cities, it is identified the protagonism of teachers in the construction and conduct of proposals aimed at the permanence of the school in the students' lives in an attempt to maintain the bond (OLIVEIRA, 2020). We became aware of a municipality that did not adhere to the BNCC's History proposal because it considered that the program developed in partnership with the local university and with a broad team of teachers is more appropriate to what is intended to teach the youth and children of that place.

What can we learn from these stories? Much, but we believe that allying themselves with the rich diversity that is presented in schools about the curriculum in action, or about the knowledge elected to compose the category of school content, is a much safer way to consolidate the scenarios of quality education.

Final outrage

Returning to the BNCC government propaganda at the beginning of the article and imagine the continuation of the scene in different Brazilian schools. On the one hand, we have the theme of the class – Citizenship – defined by the prescribed curriculum and we have a class with procedures rigorously standardized from the interpretation of such curriculum, represented by oral exposure, teaching posture, writing on the board, over which uniformity is sought from north to south, east to west of the country. On the other hand, there are children and adolescents in the condition of students, but advertising ends before their participation in the school scene. What would come next? According to Acosta (2013, p. 191, our translation), “neither the teacher nor the students can predict with any certainty exactly what will happen next”. However, in the imposed relationship between prescribed and edited curriculum, what will materialize as curriculum in action will always be related to the elaborate conceptions about how a subject learns. In the case of the propaganda under discussion, from the moment the first student contributes with his world reading and formulate ideas on what he understands as citizenship, there are countless scripts that can be drawn for the continuation of the scene. The attempt to guarantee a single script for the whole country would be based on the silence of the diversity that students bring into the school, which would lead to the construction of a unique narrative about the contents to be taught.

The danger of a bet on unique narratives about school contents is that they are based on certainty about the future. When prescribing the contents, the procedures, and defining the competencies to be developed from such curriculum, it is chosen knowledge that is, in the context of its formulation, those that are understood as the most appropriate in the preparation of generations for tomorrow. However, it is essential to consider the sense of unpredictability that accompanies human beings in all societies. We can prepare for a future, but if we are going to live it the way we plan it is a history that is built only in the present.

Thus, any curriculum needs to be understood as in motion, in constant construction. It is a risk to propose a curriculum generated from a school understanding based on one or two formative functions because it is not defined what the function of the human being, for which it serves or will serve, in which it will act. These answers are built block by block in the process of existence that we call life and the school has a fundamental importance in this trajectory. So, we would conclude that it is impossible to have a common national base that signals what to teach in schools?

We continue with the understanding that building a common basis for the area of History would be important. When reading the proposal in previous versions of the BNCC, since the document “Rights of Learning”, propositions that were completely dehydrated and replaced in the final version, we identify in such documents a proposal with movements. Risked to choose as school content the histories of Brazil narrated from within; it was defined that the inquiry on the sources, on the reality, would be a more promising path for the construction of historical knowledge; the main role of students and teachers was the selection and organization of knowledge within each school. Those involved in the construction of such versions, for understanding that teaching History at school is effective in an amalgam of diverse knowledge, indicated what is important for a national base, but also considered the space of invention (ACOSTA, 2013, p. 190).

The Base that we understood important does not dialogue with the finished one at BNCC. The indignation with which we ended this article refers, mainly, to what happened with the document of the area of History and everything that can happen (or not happen) if the proposal presented there to take effect in schools. However, we bet, as we always did, on the teaching action that, with courage and boldness, keeps alight the questioning power of the human being, especially of children and young people in the condition of students, who, when listened to, point us valuable paths for the reinvention of school, in spite of the adverse conditions we’re going through. We also bet that research in the field of History teaching advances in the direction of understanding the logic of so many reinventions that we encounter in everyday school, because, according to Bonafé e Rodríguez (2013, p. 218, our translation), “there is little concern in researching the alternative practices to these hegemonic resources”. We believe, finally, based on the hopeful strength of Paulo Freire (2011), that in this way we will transform what is still unpublished into viable.

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