

**Social class and conflicts in the implementation of curricular prescriptions for the teaching of art<sup>1</sup>**

***Classe social e conflito na implementação de prescrições curriculares para o ensino de arte<sup>2,3</sup>***

Mauricio Ernica <sup>(i)</sup>

Nicolli Maronese Tortorelli <sup>(ii)</sup>

<sup>(i)</sup> School of Education of the University of the State of Campinas – UNICAMP, Campinas, SP, Brazil. <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9911-7011>, [mauernica@gmail.com](mailto:mauernica@gmail.com).

<sup>(ii)</sup> Graduate Program in Scenic Arts of the University of the State of Campinas – UNICAMP, Campinas, SP, Brazil. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9900-2705>, [nicolli.torto@gmail.com](mailto:nicolli.torto@gmail.com).

**Abstract:**

This paper focuses on education inequalities, discussing the process of assertion of a given culture and of certain ways of transmitting it, such as those determined by the State to be applied by the school system. By analyzing how these advantages are taught within public schools, and how this should help to organize and legitimize the teachers' work, four conflicting relations were identified. This paper concludes that such conflicts exist because the curricular prescriptions aims at generalizing the dispositions and the relationship with the arts that is very specific to a certain social group, the educated elites, without discussing the social conditions of their production, reproduction and diffusion.

**Keywords:** education inequalities, curriculum, teacher's work, arts education, elementary school

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<sup>3</sup> References correction and bibliographic normalization services: Mônica Silva (Tikinet) – [revisao@tikinet.com.br](mailto:revisao@tikinet.com.br).

**Resumo:**

*Interessado no debate sobre educação e desigualdades, o artigo tem por objetivo discutir o processo de afirmação de uma dada cultura e de determinados modos de sua transmissão, como aqueles que o Estado, por seu poder, determina que o sistema de ensino deverá assumir. Assim, pesquisamos quatro mediações, analisadas como relações conflituosas, pelas quais as prescrições curriculares oficiais procuram se impor e legitimar no cotidiano de escolas públicas, organizando o trabalho do professor. As conclusões estão orientadas por uma ideia central: tais prescrições procuram universalizar a cultura e as disposições estéticas das elites letradas, sem discutir suas condições sociais de produção, reprodução e difusão.*

**Palavras-chave:** *educação e desigualdades, currículo, trabalho do professor, ensino de arte, ensino fundamental*

## Introduction

Equality and inequality are relations, and analyzing them presupposes, as stated by Bobbio (1993), answering at least two questions: equality between whom? In relation to what?

The literature on educational inequality builds as subjects of analysis groups defined by their social position (usually indicated by education and income) and by identity markers (usually gender and race). For example, the chances of individuals in these groups getting through different stages of the school trajectory (Ribeiro, Cenevita, & Brito, 2015; Mont'Alvão Neto, 2011), achieving the expected learning (Alves, Soares, & Xavier, 2016) or accessing positions in the class structure (Ribeiro, 2003; Hasenbalg, 2003) and certain income levels (Menezes Filho & Kirschbaum, 2015) are analyzed.

This literature has been essential for understanding the Brazilian educational reality. However, it does not suggest discussing a certain aspect of the production of educational inequalities: the social construction of school knowledge, the distribution of which can be considered more or less unequal.

The general objective of this paper is to discuss conflicts in the process of affirmation of a given culture and certain modes of its transmission, such as those that the State, through its power, determines that the education system should assume. Resuming the research of other

studies on the curriculum and history of school subjects (Chervel, 1988; Goodson, 1997; Goodson & Dowbiggin, 1995; Moreira & Tadeu, 2011; Julia, 2001; Viñao, 2008), we investigated mediations through which the perspective of certain groups, established as official curricular prescriptions, seek to impose and legitimize themselves in the daily life of public schools, organizing the teacher's work.

To address the relationship between these prescriptions and the school environment, we will mobilize the notion of double arbitrariness of pedagogical action, formulated by Bourdieu and Passeron (2008). For these authors, both the legitimate culture to be transmitted by schools and the legitimate way of transmitting it are arbitrary, products of social relations, not phenomena founded on extra-social universal principles, whatever they may be. Thus, the achievement of the legitimacy of the culture to be transmitted by the school system and the ways of transmitting it depend on the power of the social groups that support these constructions to ensure that its imposition is accepted within the education system and, more broadly, in the social environment.

We studied the social conditions for the accomplishment of the official prescriptions for the teaching of art in the final years of elementary school (MS). Our goal was to identify conflicts that mediate this realization, which may or may not help legitimize these prescriptions in schools.

The research was conducted with MS students of two state schools in the city of Campinas, São Paulo. At this educational stage, art is a compulsory subject, with official curriculum guidelines. Two prescriptive documents were considered: the National Curriculum Parameters (PCN) and the Curriculum of the State of São Paulo (Brasil, 1998; São Paulo, 2012), wherein the Union and the state present the artistic languages to be taught to all students, as well as the relationship they should develop with the discipline throughout MS.

## **The research**

We opted for studying schools from a regional board of education in Campinas, the Eastern board, which covers both the city's richest central area, as well as more peripheral and poor neighborhoods. We chose two units to conduct the fieldwork, looking for opposing positions in the public education system.

The schools were selected based on their academic performance and on the students' socioeconomic profile. To this end, we used the 9th graders' results in the Portuguese test of the School Performance Assessment System of the State of São Paulo (Saresp), and the students' Socioeconomic Level Indicator (Inse) estimated by this assessment system. All schools from the Eastern board were ordered twice, depending on these variables. We selected those that belonged to the top and bottom quintiles of each order at the same time. In this way, we produced two groups of schools, which belonged concomitantly: (i) to the lower quintile of Idesp and the lower quintile of Inse; and (ii) to the upper quintile of Idesp and the upper quintile of Inse.

Having obtained both groups, we looked for one school in each of them. The one with higher performance in Saresp and higher Inse will be called Deputado, while the one with lower performance in Saresp and lower socioeconomic level will be called Bispo<sup>4</sup>.

The fieldwork was conducted by one of us, who was a student at Unicamp's licentiate program in Dance at the time. The strategies used were: observation of the classes and routine; informal and semi-structured interviews with the teachers, addressing their social and professional trajectories; informal conversation with the students; participation in teaching activities, either by assisting the teachers in setting up lesson plans and carrying out activities, or replacing them from time to time.

## **Official prescription for the teaching of art**

As already mentioned, two official prescriptions for the teaching of art in the state of São Paulo's education system were analyzed, the PCNs (Brazil, 1998) and the Curriculum of the State of São Paulo, instituted in 2008 (São Paulo, 2012). The arts PCNs were drafted shortly after the enactment of the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDB) in 1996, when art became a compulsory subject of the basic curriculum, replacing what was then called arts education. These parameters raised the perspective of arts-educators who accumulated experiences and relations with international peers in previous decades but had not much power in the Brazilian educational field until that moment, to the condition of official prescription.

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<sup>4</sup> We gave fictitious names to the schools and faculty surveyed.

Ana Mae Barbosa, a central character of this group, published, in 1989, an account of the situation of the teaching of art in Brazil, divulging important information on the subject. The work was commissioned by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the International Association for Education through Art (Insea), an entity created in the early 1950s in the wake of discussions at Unesco. The full document, which the Brazilian account is part of, was organized by Elliot W. Eisner. In 1998, Eisner would appear as a reference author for the PCNs, a position shared with Barbosa, who would also be a consultant of the document.

In 1989, Barbosa's diagnosis reads as a catastrophic narrative. Granting exception to two private schools in São Paulo, both geared towards the intellectualized fractions of its elite, the educator states:

I wish not to sound apocalyptic in stating that 17 years of compulsory education in art has not developed the aesthetic quality of arts-education in schools. The low quality issue affects not only arts-education, but all other areas of education in Brazil. The current situation of general education in Brazil is dramatic. (Barbosa, 1989, p. 173)

Ten years later, the first part of the PCNs formulate a history of the education in art in Brazil, wherein there is a rejection of what would be two major dominant perspectives, responsible for Barbosa's catastrophic legacy in 1989: "one that proposes repetition exercises or the mechanical imitation of finished models. Another, which deals only with self-stimulating activities" (Brasil, 1998, p. 94).

The first is the traditional perspective, guided by the reproduction of models and the primacy of technique, which dates back to the institution of the teaching of art in the country's schools in 1854 (Brasil, 1998, p. 23). According to the PCNs,

In traditional schools, manual skills, "artistic gifts", habits of organization and precision were valued, showing a view of art that was simultaneously utilitarian and immediate. Teachers worked with conventional exercises and models selected by them in manuals and textbooks. The teaching of art was essentially geared towards the technical domain, more focused on the figure of the teacher. He was responsible for "transmitting" to students the codes, concepts and categories associated with imitative aesthetic patterns, which varied from language to language, but always featured the reproduction of models. (Brasil 1998, p. 23)

This tradition would cross the twentieth century and gain new impetus with the 1971 LDB, when the teaching of art was dominated by artistic design (Barbosa, 1989; Brasil, 1998).

The second perspective, guided by free and spontaneous self-expression, stood as a counterpoint to the technical tradition. Under the influence of modernist aesthetics and progressivism, it was experimented with in various Brazilian schools from the 1920s on, changing the models and patterns that had prevailed in the teaching of art until then. According to the PCNs, in this approach

The teaching of art focuses on the students' natural development, centered on the respect for their needs and aspirations, valuing their forms of expression and understanding of the world. Pedagogical practices, instructional, with emphasis on the repetition of models and the teacher, are reviewed, shifting the emphasis to the processes of development of students and their creations. (Brasil, 1998, p. 24)

The perspective assumed by the PCNs presents itself as a rejection of the other two. The traditional approach is criticized for being restricted to the reproduction of established models and for not focusing on the development of creativity. Experimentation guided by free and spontaneous self-expression, in turn, is criticized because, by presupposing the student's natural development, it rejects the teaching of artistic languages of adults, leaving teachers in a passive position. Thus, if the students have had no prior contact with artistic languages, their work will be restricted to practices lacking reflection and the appropriation of languages.

Limited by the legal determination that included four artistic languages in one discipline – visual arts, dance, music and theater –, the PCNs seek to define a unique perspective from which to approach each one, organized based on artistic experience. This proposal is structured in three inseparable axes: artistic production, artistic appreciation and historical reflection. In their first mention of these three organizing dimensions of education in art, the PCNs present the theoretical references by which they are guided, among them Ana Mae Barbosa, also a consultant of the document, and Elliot W. Eisner.

In her report 10 years earlier, when narrating the public interventions she performed throughout the 1980s, speaking to art teachers in several Brazilian states in defense of guidelines that would be included in the PCNs over the next decade, Barbosa makes it clear that audiences rejected the position she defended. In some cases, the reaction of her interlocutors who adopted the position she called spontaneist was aggressive. “Instead of questions they sent me written

accusations of being conservative, alienated, a slave to international capitalism, of rejecting arts-education, etc.” (Barbosa, 1989, p. 180). Meanwhile,

one guest speaker, who was almost hysterically applauded by the audience, spoke out against the assessment of and even the commentary on the students’ artwork in the classroom, and defined art as “a loud laugh to oxygenate life when old age comes.” (Barbosa, 1989, p. 180)

We will not address the disputes through which, in the field of public education policies, a powerless position that was even rejected by arts-educators achieved, 10 years later, the expressive victory of being made viable by the Sate as a national curriculum parameter for education in art. However, this process is a fundamental mediation of the constitution of the phenomenon we address, producing a contradiction that we will return to in the final considerations.

The second part of the PCNs presents the content of their proposal: developing the four artistic languages in their specificities. General objectives, content and evaluation criteria are presented for each of them. In addition to prescribing guidelines for teaching, the document also prescribes the expected relationship between student and art at the end of ES. It is a non-utilitarian, non-instrumental relationship that should be pleasurable, focused on personal artistic experience and cultural creation.

These students must master the various artistic languages by appropriating works, acquiring the knowledge necessary to contextualize them socio-historically. They should also be able to mobilize this knowledge in authorial achievements, which together should be thought of as an integral part of youth culture. In the official words,

At this moment, in addition to learning about the norms and conventions of the different artistic languages, students can interpret them, recognize more clearly that there is a historical and social contextualization and personal mark in artistic works, and it is in this sense that they include these components in their own works. This personal mark or style, now realized with intention, coupled with the pleasure of spelling out arguments and poetic propositions, now emerges as a strong and conscious part of the values of youth culture. Students can now clearly identify the position their community occupies in the context of different spaces of cultural production, comparing, interpreting and positioning themselves against a wide range of artistic proposals from their region and other regions of the country and of other countries. The identification of the historical transformations that occur in the artistic productions of the different communities is now understood, since the chronology of the different moments of the history of the arts is now clear to the students. (Brasil, 1998, p. 61)

Since their publication, the PCNs were assumed as references for the reorganization of education in the country, associating themselves with other public policies, such as textbook evaluation and teacher training, and would also influence the curricula of units of the federation. The Curriculum of the State of São Paulo was created 10 years after the PCNs, as an initiative of the Department of Education of São Paulo, in 2008, when managers who had been responsible for producing the PCNs began to command the state's educational policy.

This document, besides setting out general objectives for teaching, proposes ways of planning and organizing the teacher's work, including objectives, themes, content and skills to be developed, as well as the expected progression of the student in the subjects and assessment methodologies. These topics are detailed in three books: the Teacher's, with propositions of topics, lessons, homework, research, exercise solving, and assessment methodologies; the Student's, with texts, images and activities; and the Manager's, which we did not analyze.

The Curriculum of the State of São Paulo and the PCNs have many points in common. The history of education in art in the country built by these documents is roughly the same. The curriculum mentions the PCNs, explicitly positioning itself as "in agreement" with them, organizing the teaching of art in three methodological axes: creation/production, aesthetic enjoyment and reflection (São Paulo, 2012, p. 197). Ana Mae Barbosa is the central reference of the curriculum for the formulation of this triangular proposal (São Paulo, 2012, p. 197).

Both documents share the goal of establishing a specific relationship of students with art and culture through teaching. They aim to strengthen the students' individual artistic identity, promote a sense of belonging to social groups, as well as encourage the relationship between education and culture in general.

These background similarities are not shaken by their differences. For example, the curriculum includes a fifth language, i.e., audiovisual language. Beyond this obvious disparity, there are actual pedagogical distinctions between them, which can be explained by changes in the field of public education policies that occurred in the 10 years that separate the documents, resulting from the emergence of other groups with power to influence these policies.

In these 10 years, competence has become a central category in the construction of curricula (Dolz & Ellaigner, 2004). Thus, the document from São Paulo presents itself as a "curriculum that promotes competences" (São Paulo, 2012, p. 14). Another change that

occurred during this period was the creation of policies for the evaluation of educational systems. Articulating these two changes, the São Paulo curriculum defines “as learning competences those that were formulated within the theoretical framework of the National High School Exam (ENEM)” (São Paulo, 2012, p. 20).

We will also not address the conditions under which, in the creation of public policies, the group that had gained the power to transform its perspective of the teaching of art into an official prescription would need to share this power and find compromise solutions with other groups that imposed, at the center of educational policies, the formulation of competences associated with policies of evaluation of educational systems.

Notwithstanding these differences, the two documents share common references concerning the relationship to be established between students and art. In the session “Fundamentals of the teaching of art” (São Paulo, 2012, p. 186), the São Paulo curriculum defines the appropriation of artistic work as the experience of traveling through a constructed and specific universe, distinct from everyday life, which materializes the “experience and perception of the world, transforming the flow of movements into something visual, textual or musical. Art creates a sort of commentary” (Kruger, B. cited by São Paulo, 2012, p. 189).

Both documents aim to universalize a rare relationship with works of art, which presupposes the development of autonomous aesthetic dispositions, freed from the urgencies of needs and practical applications (Bourdieu, 2011). Both assume that teachers have developed these dispositions and want students to develop them by appropriating what is recognized as a cultural and artistic heritage, becoming creators of culture.

By instituting as an official prescription for the teaching of art a proposal that was peripheral until recently, the documents treat what is socially specific and rare as universalizable: the aesthetic dispositions of specific groups – literate fractions of the elites – that presuppose the independence of subjects in relation to the urgencies of necessity and practical injunctions (Bourdieu, 1983). In doing so, the documents do not address the conditions for achieving what they prescribe; they do not address the social conditions of acceptance and legitimation of this proposal in education systems, nor the possibilities for development of the prescribed aesthetic dispositions, which generate the pure, aestheticizing and creative eye.

Nevertheless, what is omitted in the discourse that prescriptions build upon themselves, seeking legitimization, is a fundamental dimension of the approach proposed by studies on the historical construction of the curriculum and school subjects (Chervel, 1988; Goodson, 1997; Goodson & Dowbiggin, 1995; Julia, 2001; Viñao, 2008). These studies highlight the creative role of the school, considering that the school subjects would constitute the interaction between prescriptions, educator communities and students. From these interactions, school cultures are constructed as amalgams, establishing compromises between disputing subgroups and traditions (Goodson, 1997; Goodson & Dowbiggin, 1995). They would then define knowledge and norms to be transmitted and practices to be carried out, which, supported by educator communities, found traditions that now occupy positions in the school environment. And in this environment, the different disciplines, with their traditions, fight for status, resources and territories, which defines the power relations between them.

Therefore, the efforts to impose new prescriptions should address the school cultures and hierarchies existing in this field, producing conflicts that are visible in practices (Julia, 2001). In this work, we studied the relationship between legal prescriptions and school cultures, seeking to understand the relations between the artistic dispositions of subjects whose practices are affected by these prescriptions.

## Schools and teachers<sup>5</sup>

Julia (2001) proposes three levels of analysis of school culture as a historical object: prescriptions, teachers and practices. Having presented the prescriptions, we will analyze the two schools and the two teachers investigated. The school units will be presented based on their positions in the school field and on the consolidated traditions for the teaching of art that define both the goals and values defended by educators and students concerning the position of the discipline in the hierarchy of subjects. The teachers will be presented based on the social position of their families and on their professional trajectories, through which we will seek to understand the aesthetic dispositions they have developed and the goals and values for the teaching of art

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<sup>5</sup> The presentation of the schools and teachers is based on information obtained using different methodological strategies, exposed earlier. After obtaining the information, we sought to present them with the utmost respect to the observations made, while prioritizing the issues we are interested in analyzing. Possible imbalances in information between teachers and schools are the result of the limits imposed by the differences in the relationships built in the fieldwork that we could not overcome, even later, when verifying specific pieces of data.

defended by them. Considering their professional education, aesthetic dispositions and teaching practices, we will try to analyze the conflicts through which compromise solutions are established, which, by amalgamating different goals and values, define the practices involved in the teaching of art.

### **The Deputado school and the teacher Juliana**

The Deputado school is part of the group of units of the Eastern Board that simultaneously have a higher performance in Saesp's Portuguese test and students with higher socioeconomic level. In it, 35 hours of fieldwork were carried out during the second semester of 2015. We followed the afternoon activities of a sixth grade class and two seventh grade classes, all under the responsibility of teacher Juliana.

This school is located in the central region of Campinas, about 3 km from the City Hall, in an area that concentrates upper-class residents. The school's administration office reported that its students live predominantly in adjacent neighborhoods where, according to the Index of Social Vulnerability of São Paulo (IPVS), families with low social vulnerability predominate.

The school has two large blocks of classrooms built on the same grounds, where there is also a courtyard, two video rooms and a science lab. There is a multi-sport court on the opposite side of the street, which, due to the high rates of teacher absenteeism, is always occupied by students.

Teacher Juliana was in her first year as a state school teacher. She only worked at the Deputado school, having been hired on an emergency basis in *category O*. Teachers under this regime are not permanent, and despite taking over the discipline during the school year, the renewal of their contract or their permanence in the school in the following year are not guaranteed.

Juliana's mother was born in Maringá, Paraná. She received all of her basic schooling in public schools, and started reading fiction literature from a young age. She finished high school and stopped studying after becoming pregnant with Juliana. After her daughter turned 5, she studied Letters. Later, she also graduated in Law. She worked as an English and Portuguese

teacher at private and public schools, and also as coordinator, deputy principal and principal of public schools. She is currently the secretary of education of a municipality in the countryside of São Paulo, where she also works as a lawyer.

Juliana's father was born in Registro, São Paulo. He studied Business Administration for one year at the Mackenzie University, in São Paulo. When his daughter was born, he interrupted his studies and moved with his family to Registro, where he graduated in Accounting. He currently works at the Basic Sanitation Company of the State of São Paulo (Sabesp), being in charge of intermediate management. He has never shown much interest in the arts. Despite having always supported Juliana's professional career, he was never happy about her choice, having even said that "dance has corrupted" his daughter.

Juliana was born in São Paulo but raised in Registro. She studied in a school of the Bradesco Foundation, but transferred to a private school, where she finished high school. The transfer happened as a strategy of the family to increase the daughter's chances of enrolling at a selective university.

Juliana's relationship with the arts as discipline was good in the early years of her schooling. She reports pleasurable experiences. The art teacher at the school of the Bradesco Foundation, with a degree in Visual Arts, addressed different languages. As Juliana was part of a dance group and of a theater group, she established a relationship of complicity with the teacher. At the private school, the discipline emphasized the history of the visual arts and its *avant-garde* manifestations. At this time, Juliana developed a relationship of displeasure and demobilization with the discipline, sometimes having to retake tests due to her poor marks.

She started tap dancing and ballet at age 6, and after age 13, dedicated herself exclusively to tap dancing. Between ages 15 and 17, before transitioning to higher education, she gave dance lessons in a project for families held in public schools, in a dance academy and in a nursery school.

Despite these teenage experiences, Juliana received a degree in Law from the State University of Maringá in 2010. During her time at the University, she participated in its tap dance group, which she also gave lessons to.

In the last year of graduation, Juliana twisted her foot, and can no longer dance since then. After finishing the course, she worked as a receptionist at a dance academy while preparing

to take the OAB exam. However, disinterested in Law, she did not put in much effort, and ended up failing.

Unable to dance and discouraged from pursuing her career in Law, Juliana considered taking a technical course in dance, with the aim of giving dance lessons in non-school settings. It was her mother who suggested that she enrolled in a licentiate program in dance, arguing that this degree would also give her the possibility of teaching art in basic education. Juliana followed her mother's advice and moved to São Paulo, where she studied dance at Faculdade Paulista de Artes (2012-2014).

In the second year of this course, she was diagnosed with herniated disc. So, besides no longer being able to dance, she was also denied the possibility of giving dance lessons in non-school settings, as she wished. Her only remaining choice was teaching art in the state school system.

According to her report, during her school years, she would consistently consume art. Registro did not offer many options; shows not produced locally were rare, and she was usually part of the cast in those that were. In those years, however, Juliana traveled to São Paulo a few times to watch musicals, plays and tap dance shows. In her second graduation, she became acquainted with contemporary dance. Living in São Paulo, she was able to watch shows performed on prestigious stages, such as the Sérgio Cardoso theater, and the Rumos Program of the Itaú Cultural Institute.

When interviewed, Juliana said she rarely attended cultural events. She found herself making excuses not to go, such as being overworked, getting irritated by the noise, or Campinas' restricted cultural programming. Later on, she said that her frustration with the impossibility of dancing again led her to stop watching shows. However, not attending the cultural programming of Campinas or São Paulo was perceived by her as a negative experience, not only because she could no longer dance, but also because of her professional transition to teaching. According to Juliana, being an art teacher who does not consume art makes her an educator, but not an arts-educator, which for her is the true role of art teachers.

Before teaching in basic education, Juliana had low expectations for the teaching of art in public schools, the result of the pessimistic vision she developed when witnessing the difficulties reported by her mother: lack of materials, infrastructure, qualified and interested professionals, among others.

On the eve of her first class in the public system, she was terrified. She believes that her previous experience and the licentiate course had trained her as a dance teacher and she was well prepared to teach in non-school settings; however, she was unprepared to act as an art teacher in basic education. Few of her teachers had experience in basic education, and she did not know the official prescriptions.

To plan her course, Juliana studied the PCNs and the activities proposed in the State Books. She points out that the proposed activities are very extensive, and it is difficult to perform all of them and achieve all prescribed objectives within a single school year. She also states that the proposals of the Teacher's Book are difficult to understand, as they mobilize theoretical references and artistic languages that teachers are not always acquainted with.

In addition to the official prescriptions, she willingly devoted herself to the study of complementary references for each language, always looking for recognized authors: for dance, Rudolf von Laban and Isabel Marques; for theater, Viola Spolin; for music, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze.

Juliana strove to develop a proposal for the teaching of art that was compatible with the official prescriptions. She explored the four artistic languages in various activities, grounded in the three axes defined in the prescriptions. She also sought to associate the students' cultural references and their daily experiences with the cultural proposals present in the curriculum.

Juliana proposed theoretical and practical classes, justifying her choice with an argument similar to that used in the prescriptions to criticize the so-called spontaneist tradition. According to the teacher, all the students would do in previous classes was drawing, with no systematical offering of references.

The school had various materials, such as different types of paper, pens, ink, brushes, pencils, spray paint, cardboard, audiovisual equipment, scissors, different types of glue, string, rulers, and if any additional material was needed, it was possible to request it. Despite this, Juliana complained about the lack of infrastructure. The spaces offered by the school were not adequate and, despite the possibility of using the courtyard, it always needed to be shared with students who were not in class. There was no place to let the productions dry safely, nor where to put them on display. The school had no musical instruments.

Juliana stated that the school recognized art as a field of knowledge. However – and despite its effort to conform to the official prescriptions – the legitimacy of its proposal was questioned. She faced resistance because of the expectations of other teachers, the board of directors, the pedagogical coordination and the students about the subject.

Her colleagues and the teaching staff pressured her to address contents from other disciplines, as if art was an extension of them, offering extra time to meet priority demands. The teacher was asked to develop topics of Portuguese (grammar and text comprehension) and mathematics (geometry and graph reading).

During the research period, the Department of Education of the state of São Paulo announced a major reorganization of the school system, and the Deputado school was threatened with closure. To avoid this risk, the pedagogical planning was adjusted, emphasizing the activities that could most directly increase the students' performance in Saesp's Portuguese and math tests. The art teacher was required to work with text comprehension. While not drastically changing her planning, Juliana needed to make changes to the organization of her classes, to the contents addressed, and to the assessment methodologies.

Students, in turn, rarely adhered to Juliana's proposals. With the exception of a few creative activities (body percussion) and exercises of theoretical criticism and fruition (Afro-Brazilian culture and advertising), the students often questioned the legitimacy of what was proposed, and reluctantly participated in artistic practices. The indisposition was greater towards dance activities, but was also visible in what was proposed for other languages. They also disliked lectures and studying elements of theory, and often questioned the validity of the knowledge offered, the necessity of the exercises, and the relevance of the artistic practices. For them, in art, they should be taught drawing techniques and develop skills for manual activities, evoking the logics of the technician tradition.

Due to this conflict with the students, the teacher tried making further adjustments to her planning. However, when group discussions and exercises were proposed, if the students were not closely monitored by the teacher, they would easily lose focus and not perform the activity. As Juliana had explained that their performance in activities would be part of the

evaluation, whenever the students questioned the proposition very strongly, she would claim that the activity was to be graded. Resigned, they were forced to participate.

### **The Bispo school and the teacher Jane**

The Bispo school is part of the group of units of the Eastern Board that simultaneously have a lower performance in Saresp's Portuguese test and students with lower socioeconomic level. In it, 25 hours of fieldwork were carried out during the second semester of 2015. We followed two sixth grade classes and one seventh grade class in the morning, all under the responsibility of teacher Jane.

The school is located 8.2 km from Campinas' City Hall, and its students live in the nearby neighborhood, which concentrates families in situations of high social vulnerability, according to the IPVS. The region has characteristics that common to the poor peripheries: scarcity of public services and precarious housing and infrastructure.

There are three blocks on the school grounds, interconnected by a central corridor. In all, there are four hallways with classrooms, a hallway with administration offices, three courtyards, one court and a playground. The art teacher had a thematic room, specific to the discipline.

Jane belongs to the *F category* of the state's teaching staff. Teachers under this contract have been selected in an open competition, which means they cannot be fired or work longer than 8 hours per day and 200 hours per month. Jane has been a public school teacher for 22 years, 8 of them at the Bispo school.

Her father finished the early years of elementary school (PS) and worked in an accounting office, doing mundane tasks. Her mother had the same education level as her husband and worked as a maid. Both had a very distant relationship with the arts. Jane's schooling took place in public schools of Campinas, where she only had art classes in MS, establishing no special relationship with the discipline, just like her parents.

Jane's first professional experience was with accounting. She got her high school degree from a vocational-technical school in the field and was hired by the office where her father worked. However, when the office's owner passed away, she lost her job and was unable to find another in this market.

Until then, Jane had never considered working as an art teacher. However, it was the early 1990s, and the discipline became compulsory in basic education. While groups of arts-educators vied for the prerogative of defining curricular guidelines for the discipline, and the state of São Paulo held open competitions for hiring teachers in the field, Jane identified the opportunity to get a new job. To this end, she attended a two-year licentiate course in Arts at the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC) of Campinas, followed by a third year of specialization in Fine Arts. She would soon be selected in an open competition.

In these two decades as an art teacher, Jane has attended only the compulsory training offered by the Regional Board of Education and has not developed a closer relationship with the arts. She claims she likes to draw with footage on graph paper; they are drawings that mobilize simple resources, technical and figurative, portraying natural and urban landscapes. According to the teacher, she has painted on fabrics and on canvas. As consumer, Jane attends visual art exhibitions only on visits organized by the school for the students. On these occasions, she accompanies them. Asked about her tastes, her answer was that she appreciates "works by renowned authors." Prompted to mention a few authors, she cited two authors of French Impressionism, Edgar Degas and Claude Monet, without pursuing the subject.

When mentioning the principles by which she guides her students' work and her evaluation criteria, the teacher's aesthetic preferences were made explicit. Jane's taste gravitates towards figurative elements, content considered beautiful, "natural proportions" and classic ideals of symmetry and harmony, which she calls "well painted".

The explicit taste and artists cited are consistent with a central element of the teaching of art at the Bispo school: the priority given to the visual arts. No work with the other artistic languages was mentioned.

However, in the activities actually proposed to the students, the few references to the visual arts were lost. They were guided by a variant of the technicist tradition and were intended for the production of items with utilitarian value. The teacher prioritized the development of manual skills through activities such as cutting, painting, collage and contouring of various

figures, such as skeletons, witches, pumpkins and ghosts that were used as decorations at the Halloween party. The teacher would often copy a text on the board and ask students to illustrate it. As evaluation criteria, she observed “if the ground and sky had been colored, if the student drew the borders right, if the drawing occupied most of the sheet”.

For Jane, work based on the production of decoration items and communication pieces is justified because “painting and cutting help develop fine coordination and consolidate the students’ knowledge of geometric shapes, while folding” supports the learning of math topics. In addition, she claims that these activities facilitate evaluation and produce results that can be shown to parents.

At the school, art worked as an extension of other disciplines, ready to be mobilized to meet priority demands of the board of directors and other teachers. For the board of directors, the discipline provided services of production of decoration items and communication pieces, especially posters. For the other teachers, art fulfilled three auxiliary roles: it served as a reinforcement class, especially for Portuguese and mathematics; it provided didactic support, producing models and communication pieces; and it offered extra time, when the teacher allowed her class to be used for students to complete activities from other subjects.

Given the huge gap between what was done at the school and what is prescribed in the official documents, the teacher was asked if she knew the PCNs or the state’s Curriculum. She not only affirmed knowing about them, but also stated that she organized her classes based on the State Books. The most recurrent use we noted was the indication of pages for students to read and answer exercises on, in addition to the proposition of reading texts available in the Books so they could be subsequently represented in drawings.

The teacher claimed having difficulty working with contents addressed in the Books and mentioned her lack of knowledge about dance and music. For this reason, she criticizes them, but justifies herself by stating that they are “disconnected from the students’ reality”.

There was a wide variety of materials in the school, such as sheets of various types and sizes, pens, paints, brushes, pencils, clay, plaster, ribbons, scissors, glue, glitter, colored glue, hot glue, Styrofoam, rulers, drawings and molds. Given the large availability of material, the teacher did not tightly control the amount used. However, she decided which students would work with which materials according to a scale of behavior and dedication: the best behaved and dedicated could work with the paints; the well behaved but not as dedicated worked with collages; the ill-behaved and not at all dedicated colored drawings.

The Bispo school had specialized classrooms for the different subjects, which facilitated the storage of materials and works produced. Jane had never used the three courtyards and the multisport court. During the fieldwork, the audiovisual room was only used once, on a Friday of a week that had been shortened by a holiday. On that day, the board of directors gathered all the students present to watch the movie *Poeira em alto mar*, starring Renato Aragão. The activity was improvised to entertain students, taking advantage of the fact that, by chance, one teacher carried a copy of the film on his pen drive.

Jane is a disciplinarian teacher. In her view, the policy of not holding back students who fail would have had negative effects, increasing misbehavior and student disengagement. She makes them sit in predefined places and constantly controls their behavior by scolding and threatening them with low grades, being reprimanded by the principal, and losing recess time. If students lost focus when working in groups, Jane would remind them that they were being graded on the activity and of its weight in the final grade to be registered in the report cards.

However, during the semester observed, there were no conflicts related to the teaching of art at the Bispo school. Everything seemed to work well and the expectations of those involved were all in agreement. The board of directors was pleased with how the discipline was led. Not only did the teacher regularly fulfill the role assigned to her, but for her, this role highlighted the importance given by the school to the teaching of art. The students seemed equally pleased. They engaged in the activities without being forced to, never questioning them, and constantly sought the approval of the teacher, who distributed compliments and presented the best works as examples to others. Proof of this was the Cultural Fair. To finalize the products and decorations, there was intense interaction between the students, who were encouraged by the proposal to decorate the school and, therefore, mobilized what they had learned in the discipline: folding techniques, collage and painting.

## **Four mediations of the adoption of the prescriptions**

The presentation of the schools and the teachers' trajectories and pedagogical practices was designed to highlight conflicting relationships in which the prescriptions clash with the goals and values associated with the teaching of art in the school culture of each unit, defining, through the compromise between different positions, how it takes place in practice (Julia, 2001; Goodson, 1997; Goodson & Dowbiggin, 1995). In these relationships, we identified conflicts between the prescribed aesthetic dispositions (Bourdieu, 1983, 2007, 2011) and the schools' context. We identified four elements in this context: (i) the teachers' dispositions, (ii) the students' dispositions, (iii) the dispositions assumed in the schools' traditions and in the hierarchy of disciplines, and, finally, (iv) the materials and spaces available in the schools. Based on the relationship of the prescriptions with each of these contextual elements, we defined four mediations through which the prescriptions are enforced.

The first mediation is defined by the relationship between, on the one hand, the aesthetic dispositions assumed in the prescriptions and, on the other, the teachers' dispositions. The educated teacher, capable of mobilizing the four languages in all three dimensions, is rare.

Teaching was a negative choice for the two teachers interviewed, after the frustration of other plans. Both are trained in only one artistic language, and, in the schools, they are required to address the four languages in the three prescribed dimensions.

Their dispositions related to art are different, however. Juliana is close to the more legitimate artistic manifestations; in addition to her taste for the more prestigious manifestations, she maintains an autonomous relationship with the arts, materialized in disinterested experiences. Jane's dispositions, in turn, are distant from the more prestigious artistic practices; although he claims to recognize "works by renowned authors," her taste leans toward less prestigious and utilitarian manifestations.

The greater proximity to the logics of the prescriptions gives Juliana more resources to appropriate their proposals, to seek further training by studying recognized authors in the area, and to explore other languages. However, exploring them is not a simple process and can result in failed activities, such as when the teacher tried to use the color circle to show that white is the union of all colors. The students made and painted their circles, but when they rotated them, the resulting color was not white. The teacher did not know that for the activity to work, it

would be necessary for the colors to have precise tones and intensities and that the circles should be rotated at a high speed.

Jane, on the other hand, has two ways of dealing with her distance from the prescriptions: through curricular reduction, addressing no language other than those in which she is trained on; and by organizing her discipline according to the technician tradition. In short, Jane's teaching of art does not follow the prescriptions.

The second mediation is defined by the relationship between the dispositions of the student idealized in the prescriptions and the dispositions of the real students. This conflict arises from the universalization, in the prescriptions, of the relationship between art and the teaching of art that is characteristic of some social groups: the elites who cultivate free and disinterested experiences with fruition, artistic activity and the history of art.

In both schools, the aesthetic dispositions of the students are distant from those that guide the prescriptions. They manifest expectations that are closer to the technician tradition of the teaching of art than those prescribed, and often claim the usefulness of artistic knowledge.

At the Deputado school, this resulted in heated disputes. On one of the occasions when the teacher proposed a body percussion activity, there was great resistance from the students. When asked at the end of class about the reasons for not adhering to the proposal, they answered: "This is not art, it serves no purpose, in art class we have to learn to draw."

At the Bispo school, there was the express intention of making art productions useful. As a variant of the technician tradition, the Bispo school's project meets the expectations of the board of directors, families and students. Similarly, teacher and students have dispositions that generate similar preferences. Therefore, by denying the prescription, affirming one of the traditions of the teaching of art, the school and the teacher produce a great agreement between their expectations, drastically reducing conflicts.

The third mediation is defined by the relation between the prescribed aesthetic dispositions and the traditions of the teaching of art. As we have seen, the proposal expressed in the PCNs was in a peripheral position in the Brazilian educational field until 10 years before its publication and, by affirming itself, it intended to reject the traditions in force.

The proposal for the teaching of art that the teacher tried to enforce in the Deputado school followed the official prescriptions. However, although her aesthetic dispositions were close to those presumed in the prescriptions, and despite her effort to follow the official guidelines as closely as she could, her attempt to implement them generated conflicts with the students, the technical staff and the faculty. These clashes reinforced the non-legitimation of the proposal prescribed in the official documents, adopted by the teacher and compatible with her dispositions.

The dominant tradition at the Bispo school conceives art as a space for the development of techniques and production of decoration items and communication pieces, being limited to the visual arts. In addition, at the school, art played a time-saving role for meeting priority demands from other disciplines and the board of directors. If this proposal is too far from the one prescribed, on the other hand, it is very close to the expectations of families and students and is strongly rooted in school culture. As the State Books are supposed to be used compulsorily, the teacher would subvert them to find means through which she was able to keep following the tradition and ignore the pedagogical guidelines.

The fourth mediation is defined by the relationship between the need for materials and spaces assumed in the prescriptions, and what was available in the schools. Some materials were more common. Musical instruments and electronic equipment, such as a projector and stereo, were rare. Space is an even rarer resource.

At the Deputado school, teacher Juliana's proposals were regularly limited by the lack of adequate spaces. When planning body practices, she needed to carry them out in the courtyard, the use of which was always shared with students who were not in class. Thus, the presence of others who they did not know reinforced her own students' reluctance to engage in these activities. When she proposed the creation of a panel to compose the scenery of a play, there was no place in the school to leave it drying, or where to perform the rehearsals.

On the other hand, the Bispo school, also because of the curricular reduction, had all the necessary materials, including some underused structures. It has much more space than the Deputado school, such as empty classes and a court that can be used without sharing. The teacher also had her own class, specific for art, which facilitated the storage of materials and productions. In it, lack of materials or spaces would only emerge as problems if the curriculum approached the prescriptions.

## Final considerations

In a class society, it is to be expected that the groups with the most power to define the legitimate culture and the legitimate forms of relationship with this culture are those who are able to impose the culture to be transmitted and the modes of its transmission on the education system. As it is not a mechanical process, both the definition of prescriptions and their realization occur in a space of disputes between groups and class fractions, in which different agents, occupying different positions in the educational field, fight for the power to impose their cultural biases.

The art PCNs and the State Books are the expression of the victory of arts-educators who had accumulated experience and inserted themselves in international networks until the late 1980s, but still assumed a peripheral position in the field of art education until then. In the second half of the 1990s, this group reached the center of power, turning its perspective into a national curriculum parameter. Even though they needed to negotiate with other groups that accumulate power to define the prescriptions for the teaching of art, these arts-educators were able to remain in this position throughout the 2000s.

Almost 20 years after the publication of the PCNs and almost 10 years after the implementation of the Curriculum of the State of São Paulo, having analyzed the conflicts resulted from the application of these prescriptions in the school environment, we can say that the current proposal for the teaching of art in these documents is structured on a fundamental contradiction. On the one hand, there is a clear democratizing impulse to access art as a universal right. Nevertheless, this impulse is based on an assumption that is not problematized: that the culture of the literate elites and the aesthetic dispositions of these elites can be universalized in and by the education system – thus, compulsorily – as if they were the realization of a general human attribute and not the imposition, in a space of dispute, of a cultural bias.

Therefore, in trying to understand the conflicts present in the application of the prescriptions, we sought to characterize them as mediations of the effort of affirmation and legitimation, through the monopoly of the symbolic violence of the State (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2008), of the culture of the literate elites. These groups have their positions defined in the school environment that they want to transform, and they compete with these fractions of the literate elites for the same prerogative of defining what and how it will be taught in art.

It is possible to achieve a state of maximum compliance between the prescriptions and the conditions of their application, wherein the conflicts of the four mediations mentioned above will be reduced to the maximum. These situations are rare and more likely to be found in schools of social groups that are richer in cultural capital, such as the two partial exceptions pointed out by Barbosa (1989), one of them studied by Almeida (2009). Considering the strong segregation in the country's education system, this is not the case of the two schools surveyed, nor of public schools in general, despite all internal differences.

Another possible extreme situation, opposite to this, would be the maximum nonconformity between the prescriptions and their application. This is the case of the Bispo school, where the denial of the prescriptions is a condition for reaffirming the conformity between the dispositions and expectations of teachers, students, families and technical staff, as well as for it to reproduce a tradition.

Between these extremes, there is a vast field of possibilities. This world between extremes, as the case of the Deputado school suggests, is a space of open conflict.

The fundamental contradiction in the prescriptions we have exposed is a manifestation of what Bourdieu (2007) calls the scholastic error. They seem to assume that the school system would be able to universally develop, for all, the aesthetic dispositions of the educated urban elites, without having to consider the social conditions of production and reproduction of these dispositions. By universalizing their position, the prescriptions discuss neither the relation of different social classes with culture nor the relation of symbolic domination between classes, or the conflicts that can be expected in the diffusion of the dispositions of the literate elites. Consequently, the documents seem to assume that their legitimacy would be assured by their officiality – the power of the State – and by the justification they create for their position: the negative evaluation of the traditions they want to surpass, and the universality they attribute to their position.

It is possible to make good arguments for why the teaching of art should be guided by the culture and dispositions of the literate elites. This culture can be considered a value – and a right – for extrinsic and intrinsic reasons. On the one hand, it is socially valued, endowing symbolic power to those who retain it, and offering them advantages in different social fields. On the other, it is overwhelmed by an accumulation of symbolic goods and possibilities of manifestation and development of imagination and emotions that precede and surpass the

groups that, at a given moment, concentrate the social conditions of their appropriation. Based on this argument, one can think of the inequalities of access of different social groups to the culture of the elites.

Although valid, this argument does not resolve the contradiction pointed out here. For that end, it is necessary to reflect on the social conditions of production, reproduction and legitimation, in the education systems of class societies, of the relation with the culture of the literate elites, investigating the social conditions to generalize the act of liberation of needs and practical purposes for immersion in the specific world created by art.

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