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SCHOOLS, DISCRIMINATION AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

José Carlos Teixeira Pistilli
CBNB/ COMAER
Rio de Janeiro - RJ
http://lattes.cnpq.br/1532187548265953

Tamara Tania Cohen Egler
IPPUR/UFRJ
Rio de Janeiro - RJ
http://lattes.cnpq.br/0153108968139259

Abstract: The study sought to explore, based on everyday school life, the influence of discrimination against students on school performance and its relationship with the place of residence and the location of the school. It was carried out in two schools of the Municipal Public Network of Rio de Janeiro, one far away and the other in the interior of the slum, raising questions about the specificities of discrimination and common points in each of these school units. The official documents provided by the schools and by the SME show the disparity in the academic performance of their students in the cognitive (learning) and behavioral aspects. The representations (statements) of teachers, through interviews, and students, through essays and drawings, pointed to scenarios of discrimination present in the daily life of these two schools. The symbols contained in the language of these representations showed that students feel restricted in their freedom of expression, devalued and disrespected in their identities (BOURDIEU, 1989; HALL, 2004). The different manifestations of discrimination reveal that they are more forceful against students who live in the slum, contributing to low school performance and increasing school dropout and social exclusion, contrary to emancipatory and humanizing education (ADORNO, 1995; FREIRE, 1999). The in-depth knowledge of discrimination and its specificities in each school, as well as the improvement of working conditions and teacher's professional training are essential steps in the construction of any political-pedagogical project towards the realization of an education in tune with the real needs and desires of the students. our students.

Keywords: Discrimination, school performance, school exclusion/inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

The daily experience in the daily life of schools in the municipal public network of Rio de Janeiro calls our attention to the existence of a relationship between the location of school units, discrimination and student performance at school, from the cognitive (learning) and behavioral points of view.

> "There are good and bad public schools [...] places where there is a greater concentration of poor people, with little education and living in various situations of fragility, the school, in this place, works worse too" (RIBEIRO, 2006, page 21).

The dichotomy generated by discriminatory practices against students is related to territory and feeds relational and behavioral mismatches. These misfits are characterized by highly fragmented roles among its inhabitants. Neighborhoods and schools are the scene of discrimination that foment segregation and fragmentation, reinforcing social inequality (SIMMEL, 1987). We found that discrimination is not exclusive to schools located in poor and violent areas. Professional experience gives us evidence that discrimination is a practice that can be found in any school in the municipal public network. However, these types of violence take on their own and specific features in each school unit, depending on their location.

Public school teachers are often unaware of or disregard the fact that the student in this school network is a social being located at the center of the conflicts generated by the great urban explosion of that city, with accumulated and unsatisfied needs in relation to housing, transport, health and education, is segregated and excluded from the class-split society formed by unequal social groups with specific historical marks (FRIGOTTO, 2001). In a simplistic way, conflicts at school are mainly analyzed from the perspective of the criminalization of poverty (BUORO, 1999), an

inevitable path to the deepening of historical social inequalities on the path of barbarism (ADORNO, 1995).

In the ebb of this predatory practice that disregards the problems of life, identity and the reality of our students, it is essential to bring students' lives and their world into the pedagogical practice, valuing them, integrating their roots, creeds and cultures (FREIRE, 1999). Local differences and urban issues associated with school are social phenomena of universal importance. There are school inequalities that are due to spatial differences, that is, to the fact that the pedagogical work, teaching contents and teachers' expectations regarding students' acquisitions differ from one establishment to another depending on the geographic location (ZANTEN, 2001).

This work was guided by the search for the different physiognomies of discrimination based on territory through symbols contained in the representations of teachers and students in both schools. Violence, in the form of discrimination, whose origins can be diverse even if in a hidden way, occurs in the representations of people and groups in several different ways through language, the use of symbols that label and classify. The expressions of discrimination by symbols effectively assert themselves as instruments of stigmatization and devaluation and are capable of restricting, silencing, devaluing people and groups (BOURDIEU, 1989).

Representations "always carry echoes of other meanings [...] our information is based on propositions and assumptions of which we are not aware, but which are carried in the bloodstream of our language. Everything we say has a 'before' and an 'after' – a 'margin' on which other people can write" (HALL, 2004, p. 48).

METHODOLOGY

The work was carried out in two schools of the Municipal Public Network of Rio de Janeiro located in the same neighborhood, Escola Municipal Alpha (EM Alpha), far from the slum, and Escola Municipal Beta (EM Beta), inside the slum, which were named fictitious so that the ethical posture was maintained by preserving the secrecy of the two schools and their actors. Data collection took place over the 2008 and 2009 school years with school and SME directors, teachers, students and guardians of Elementary School II students (from 6th to 9th grade). Comparative analyzes were carried out by crossing data collected from official documents of the schools and by the SME and information obtained in the two schools from teachers and students. We opted for a mixed approach with a qualitative predominance that:

> "it works with the universe of meanings, beliefs, privileges values and attitudes, which corresponds to a deeper space of relationships, processes and phenomena that cannot be reproduced to the operationalization of variables" (MINAYO, 1994, p. 21).

School directors and SME provided us with the following documents referring to school performance (cognitive (learning) and behavior): 1. School performance report cards indicating the global concepts (school performance) that present the gradations very good (MB), good (B), regular (R) and insufficient (I), the latter leading to disapproval; 2. Result of Prova Rio 2009 which evaluated the 376 schools of the Municipal Public Education Network; 3. records in the occurrence books of each school about behavioral disorders (indiscipline) and 4. records of statistical indicators of school dropout (average of enrollments in 2005 compared to average of graduates in 2009). Data analysis consisted of comparing the percentages of school

performance by school. Data collection with EM Alpha (18 out of a total of 21) and EM Beta (18 out of a total of 20) teachers took place by consulting their notes in occurrence books and through semi-structured interviews, based on a questionnaire. semi-open on the most frequent student problems in schools (cognitive (learning) and behavioral) and on the determining factors that influence the quality of teaching work regarding working conditions and professional training (Figure 1), an effective instrument in qualitative research by facilitating the spontaneity and freedom of expression of respondents (LUDKE & ANDRÉ, 1986).

Data analysis consisted of comparing the percentages of derogatory expressions directed at students related to cognitive (learning) and the student's socio-cultural condition contained in occurrence books and citations of student problems (cognitive (learning) and behavior) and the determining factors that influence the quality of teaching work contained in the questionnaires by school. Data collection with EM Alpha students (350 out of a total of 410) and EM Beta students (300 out of a total of 460) was obtained through individual work proposed to the students so that they could express themselves through written language (writing) and drawn on two sheets of A4 paper (Figure 2) your perception of the school, its surroundings and what happens inside the school.

The analysis of the data contained in the clearest and most significant representations, due to its extension and complexity, required the organization by categorization into political, affective, subjective, social and identity dimensions (EGLER, 2006). Each of these dimensions was structured by elements that form pairs of antagonistic values, dialectically confronting each other. The political dimensions (consensus x conflict); affective (affection x disaffection);

subjective (satisfaction x dissatisfaction); social (inclusion x exclusion) and identity (high self-esteem x low self-esteem) portray the realities inherent in the world of our students related to school and are recurrent in their representations. The number of tables (written/drawn) prepared by students differed in each of the schools, the elements identified in the tables were quantified in percentage per school. Data were collected from students' guardians using information contained in a questionnaire about their children's place of residence and participation in school life and analyzed by comparing the percentages of data by school.

RESULTS

The official information provided by the directors of the two schools on global concepts (school performance) of the students (average for the years 2008 and 2009) demonstrate a predominance of the MB concepts (27% of the students) and B (51% of the students), in EM Alpha, and R (44% of students) and I (30% of students), in EM Beta. In the occurrence books referring to behavioral problems of the two schools in the years 2008 and 2009, 305 notes were recorded in EM Alpha and 745 in EM Beta. Records of statistical indicators show that the percentages of school dropout in EM Alpha and EM Beta were 18.5% and 49.5%, respectively. SME's data on the final result of Prova Rio show that EM Alpha is among the 25% best classified and that EM Beta is among the 10% least well classified.

In the data obtained from the representations (declarations) of teachers interviewed about student problems, the percentages of teachers who mentioned behavioral problems were 28% in EM Alpha and 89% in EM Beta and cognitive (learning), 22% in EM Alpha and 83% in EM Beta. To solve student problems, EM Alpha teachers (60%) suggested transferring students from

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Part I - Personal data

1) Place of residence;

2) Age;

3) Public teaching time;

4) Length of stay at school;

5) Which schools do you work in;

6) What is your weekly work load;

7) What is your highest level of education;

8) What is your level of satisfaction with the school? What is the main reason?

( ) Dissatisfied ( ) Somewhat satisfied ( ) Satisfied ( ) Very satisfied

Part II – School and urban space – School performance – Professional performance

1) Talk about this school and the urban space where it operates. Emphasis linked aspects:

a) The concept that the school has towards teachers and population;

b) Teachers and students (their self-esteem and their (dis)satisfaction);

c) The teacher-student relationship (harmony, conflict, (dis)affection, acceptance-rejection)

2) What are the biggest problems presented by the students of this school.

3) What are the causative factors and suggestions for solutions for each one of these problems. Talk about the biggest issues affecting work teacher.

Figure 1 – Questionnaire for teachers

Part I – Show, by drawing and/or writing, what your home, school and the path between your home and school are like.

Part II – Show, by drawing and/or writing, what happens inside your school.

Figure 2 – Work to obtain student representations

the slum to places closer to their homes, and EM Beta teachers (70%) suggested "pushing with their bellies" and to encourage students to "learn a trade to earn honest money". Regarding determining factors that affect teaching work, the percentages of teachers who mentioned professional training in EM Alpha and EM Beta are 39% and 44%, respectively, and working conditions in EM Alpha and EM Beta are 22 % and 94%, respectively. The percentages of derogatory expressions against students contained in the incident books referring to cognitive (learning) in EM Alpha and EM Beta were 9% and 36%, respectively, and those referring to socio-economic-cultural conditions in EM Alpha and in EM Beta they were 4% and 60%, respectively (Table 1).

The representations (written and/or drawing statements) of students about the school and about interpersonal relationships in their daily lives and in their surroundings show that the percentages in EM Alpha and EM Beta referring to consensus were 22% and 5%, respectively, and conflict were 15% and 37%, respectively; affection were 27% and 10%, respectively, and disaffection were 17% and 35%, respectively; satisfaction was 37% and 7%, respectively, and dissatisfaction was 10% and 40%, respectively; inclusion were 27% and 7%, respectively, and exclusion were 12% and 32%, respectively; high self-esteem were 30% and 7%, respectively, and low self-esteem were 5% and 37%, respectively (Table 2). In view of the complexity of cross-referencing information and the quantitative difference in representations from school to school, we chose to categorize the information into dimensions and percentages of occurrence, as shown in Table 2.

The percentage of guardians of students in the questionnaire who declared living far from the slum was 83% in EM Alpha and 8% in EM Beta and, within the slum, 5% in EM Alpha and 72% in EM Beta. As for attendance at school, responding to school summons, in EM Alpha 60% of the representatives declared that they always attend and 30% almost always attend and, in EM Beta, 65% that they almost never attend and 15% never attend.

DISCUSSION

The axes of this work are school and school and social discrimination and students' and teachers' feelings were approached transversally about possible roles, sometimes as an agent, sometimes as a victim of violence at school. In this plot, through representations of students and teachers, we identify expectations, suggestions and proposals for overcoming complex problems involving interpersonal relationships in everyday school life.

The discrepancies in the school performance of students between the two school units, one inside and the other outside the slum, reinforce the idea that the geographic location of the school within the slum is directly related to the discriminatory process that triggers the student's discouragement and hence the their school failure.

Data contained in documents from the school units and the SME show that the school units closest to the slums, in general, have the worst school performance indices. The results of the first official evaluation to measure the learning performance of all students in the Municipal Public Network of Rio de Janeiro, Prova Rio – 2009, and official documents from the schools, including the bulletins containing the final global concepts (school performance), the occurrence books and the students' dropout indicators confirm this scenario.

As for the representations of teachers from the two schools, we found that they reveal specific features in the fabrics of discrimination present in each school unit.

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EM	Student problems		Suggestions for solving student problems		Determining factors that affect teaching work		Derogatory expressions	
	behavioral	Cognitive (Learning)	Transferir o estudante	"Pushing the problem forward without solving the problem...	Work conditions	Professional qualification	Cognition	Social, economic and cultural condition
Alpha	28%	22%	60%	-	22%	39%	9%	4%
Beta	89%	83%	-	70%	94%	44%	36%	60%

Table 1 - Representations of teachers

EM	Dimensions and their dialectical pairs									
	Politics		Affective		Subjective		Social		Identity	
	Consensus	Conflict	Affection	Disffection	Satisfaction	Dissatisfaction	Inclusion	Exclusion	High Self-Esteem	Low Self-Esteem
Alpha	22%	15%	27%	17%	37%	10%	27%	12%	30%	5%
Beta	5%	37%	10%	35%	7%	40%	7%	32%	7%	37%

Table 2 - Representations of students

The disdain and distancing of teachers towards students for different reasons are present in schools through symbols (BOURDIEU, 1989) contained in derogatory expressions against students living in slums. The derogatory expressions, denounced by the occurrence books and by the answers to the questionnaire, when the interviewees spoke about the schools, their actors, their feelings, satisfactions and dissatisfactions, student problems and suggestions for their resolutions, reproduce and reinforce the social inequality.

EM Alpha receives, as a priority, students living in its surroundings, who are, in the majority, students who have family support, who show interest and conditions for good school performance. As a rule, the discrimination present in teachers' and students' statements is directed at the few students living in the slum. These, seen as "strangers in the nest", end up realizing that they are poorly accepted and reflect this feeling reverberating behavioral mismatches. This reaction is used as a justification for actions on the part of the management, teachers, parents of students and students, which culminate in their purge from the school. EM Beta does not restrict the entry of students and receives mostly slum residents, without family support, who show lack of interest and poor conditions for good school performance. Teachers at EM Beta, with a higher level of dissatisfaction than those at EM Alpha, often assume a position

of criminalizing poverty, indiscriminately relating the inhospitable school environment to their clientele, distancing themselves from students and giving up any pedagogical attempt that can improve the quality of their teaching work. Not infrequently, they adopt the attitude of "pushing with their belly" until the student ends his/her stay at school or drops out of school to "earn money". Countless representations of teachers and students reveal that discrimination against students living in slums is common to both schools and, through stigmatizing symbols, they are manifested in their own ways in each of these school units. In an attempt to summarize the representations of teachers, we can say that at EM Alpha, the "purge" of the "bad boys from the slum" expresses concern about "maintaining the good level of this school, which is still selective". At EM Beta, "pushing with your belly" means saying that "it's no use hitting the edge of a knife" because "these people, these grown-ups, apprentice bandits, won't amount to anything", "they need to learn a trade at least so they don't end up in the main place where drugs are sold. In an attempt to summarize the numerous representations of students who can confirm what their teachers say, we present two representations, one of a student from EM Alpha (Figure 3) and another from EM Beta (Figure 4).

It must be noted that very often teachers refer to their inadequate professional training as a justification for their impotence in the face of a reality at school that is far removed from what the academy presents them with. The complaints of these professionals, legitimate, can be justified in the criticism of scholars to professional training courses and the need for their reformulation in the face of constant changes in society that are reflected in the school (ABRAMOVAY, 2009; CHAUÍ, 1980; ROMANELLI, 1997).

Figure 3 – Representation of EM Alpha student

In Figure 3, drawing entitled "injustice at school", the school agent says: "Look, this is a high-level school. Only the good ones stay here. Let the loafers and incompetents move away. OK?" To which the student responds: "Where did I go wrong?"

Figure 4 – Representation of EM Beta student

In Figure 4, the student displays two prejudiced phrases common at school: "Everything will live in the slum, work in the main place where drugs are sold" and "Zé Preto do Nordeste with the family from ``Cabeça Chata"

Based on student representations, we found that conflicts, disaffections, dissatisfactions, exclusions and low self-esteem prevail in EM Beta's daily life, while consensus, affection, satisfaction, inclusion and high self-esteem prevail in EM Alpha. The most expressive representations of students portrayed the various forms of violence present in schools,

especially violence that transcends the physical and affects their soul, symbolic violence (BOURDIEU, 1989). These representations denounced the teacher's discouraging and castrating pedagogical practice, which implies devaluation, discrimination, and the curtailment of freedom of expression against students living in slums, producing in them disenchantment, displeasure, and lack of interest in studying and in school. In several representations, students gave hints that the school needs to be a space of freedom of expression and offer instruments that allow creativity, production on their part and not just the reproduction of values contained in the curriculum grids coming from top to bottom, in general having little to do with their reality (Figure 5).
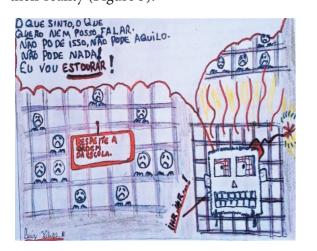

Figure 5 – Representation of EM Beta student

In Figure 5, the student displays a poster reflecting the lack of freedom of expression in the school with the saying: "Respect the order of the school" and an emblematic phrase of a student: "What I feel, what I want, I can't even say. You can't do this, you can't do that. Can't do anything! I will burst!"

The contexts of the analyzed schools are complex because they deal with the lives of our students who are so often problematic, discriminated against and distanced from us and therefore constantly confronting us, but of us so needy. The knowledge and appreciation of the student's identity, of the relationships between him and his universe of life: his family, his community, his city, are essential for the process of school and social inclusion. It is fundamental to feed the utopia of an education on the path of democracy and emancipation (ADORNO, 1995) to bring to the pedagogical practice the life of the student and his world, valuing his identity, integrating his roots, his creeds and his cultures (FREIRE, 1999), essential and essential steps for building an inclusive school at the service of the humanization of our society. The presented results make us think of interdisciplinary works, with active participation of students. Such activities need to be supported and legitimized by institutionalized school projects, which open paths for different forms in the dimension of enchantment and playfulness (ALVES, 1995). The use of languages that are in the universe of arts and technologies (EGLER, 2003) carries the possibility of giving way to the imagination, creativity, productivity and socialization of our students, values desired by them as we were able to observe so frequently. in their representations.

CONCLUSION

In view of the results presented and taking into consideration, some emblematic messages contained in representations of teachers and students, we believe that the school assumes its inclusive role, insofar as it makes the school environment a space of student acceptance. The school will only be able to fulfill its role of forming citizenship for a democratic and humane society when it values the identities of the teacher and the student, the educator and the student, increasing their self-esteem and offering real conditions for them to dialogically play the role of protagonists, of main actors in the

teaching-learning process.

Knowing the depths of discrimination involves identifying the different faces assumed by this type of violence in each school, as we seek to do in this work. To do so, we draw parallels between the representations of professors and students, always taking into consideration, their complaints and suggestions. At the same time, we resorted to information obtained from the directions, as well as from parents of students. This dynamic is a fundamental element for decision-making regarding measures aimed at improving interpersonal relationships in schools and, therefore, the quality of public education. This is the utopia that must guide the process of elaboration and execution of any political and pedagogical project committed to meeting the needs and interests of the vast majority of the population who have their only chance of schooling in public schools.

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