

Editorial

This special issue of EDUCATION and RESEARCH, entirely dedicated to the process of implementation of nine-year fundamental education in Brazil, fills us with pride. It is the first time in the history of our journal that an edition is prepared in response to a direct demand, that is to say, the Editorial Board proposed the theme and circulated it in the academic field, receiving a wide and extremely positive response. A total of 42 abstracts were initially received, and the original idea of preparing just a special section was expanded to the organization of a complete issue, now being published.

Such rapid and intense response on the part of so many colleagues not only confirmed the timeliness of the theme choice, but also made it that much more arduous our task of selecting the abstracts that would be accepted as full papers. The criteria employed here, divulged since the initial call for papers, were the adherence to the theme, as well as the preservation throughout the issue of theoretical-methodological, and regional and institutional, diversity. Our thanks go to all those who sent proposals, wrote complete articles, and especially to the reviewers, who evaluated the final texts with extreme promptness and at the same time with so much substance.

The contact with the articles presented here, with their authors and reviewers, was revealing of the intense debates that the recent process – not always successfully conducted – of the implementation of nine-year fundamental education has provoked around the country. By involving the enrolment of six-year-olds, hitherto cared for in pre-schools, in institutions of fundamental education, this policy apparently brought forward, on the one hand, the indeterminacies present in early childhood education as to its ends, in parallel to the wealth of education projects focused on the ludic dimension of learning; and it also evinced the ongoing debates about the concept of childhood prevalent in each educative space, and in the teacher education programs.

On the other hand, fundamental education has been questioned in its methodologies – are they adequate to six-year-olds, but also to children of any age? –, and in its results – how capable has our school been of achieving satisfactory literacy levels after eight or nine years of schooling? – and even as to its ends.

Today, after the experience with all these articles, with the researches that gave origin to them, with the comments and suggestions from reviewers, and with the rewritings kindly made very quickly by the authors, it seems to us that, behind an apparent opposition between playing and teaching to read and write, emphasizing the ludic or the contents, deeper

controversies reside. They relate to the concepts of childhood, of teaching and literacy, of the right of every child to education and care, as well as of the definition of quality and purpose of the school, be it called fundamental or early childhood.

These underlying issues, which the legislation and official guidelines barely touch, are to us the common thread running through the articles of this special number. It brings texts from different regions of the country, both in terms of the institutional affiliation of the authors and of the schools and school systems studied; the issues are approached from a variety of theoretical frameworks and research methodologies; and the conclusions and proposals made are not always convergent.

Since the interpretation of the same legislation varies among authors, with emphasis on different aspects, norms or guidelines, we refrained from interfering with the presentation of the legal texts made in several articles, although it may at times seem repetitive for the reader that goes through the whole special issue. We also considered that the reading of the articles is often made on a text-by-text basis, especially from the online version of the Journal.

The issue begins with texts debating in a wider sense the policy of implementing nine-year fundamental education, although they may be based on relatively localized results. The article “The contribution of quality early childhood education and its impacts on the beginning of fundamental education”, written by a group of researches associated to the Carlos Chagas Foundation, and led by Maria Malta Campos, presents partial results from a larger quantitative study conducted in 2009. In this text the quality of early childhood education, evaluated in a scale built from observations and interviews, is articulated with differences in school performance of children in three state capitals (Campo Grande, Florianópolis, and Teresina) at the start of fundamental education as measured by the so-called *Provinha Brasil*. The study indicates that attending a good quality pre-school influences positively on pupils’ performance, and also that the age of the child is an important factor in the results achieved in this text, as also is the mother’s schooling, family income, and the Ideb result of the fundamental school.

Next, Lisete Regina Gomes Arelaro, Márcia A. Jacomini and Sylvie Bonifácio Klein evaluate the implementation of nine-year fundamental education in the municipal school systems of São Paulo and Suzano, and in the São Paulo state school system on the basis of three principals: the right to education, democratic management, and quality of teaching. Based on documental analysis and interviews and observations the article “Nine-year fundamental education and the right to education” points out the continued existence of

practices that disregard both the legal precepts and the importance of the participation of those involved in the process of education; the presence of simplistic adaptations of the old first grade curriculum, with slight methodological changes; apart from a clear insufficiency of material and financial resources, from the lack of guidance to teachers, and to the absence of discussion about the future of pre-school under the new school organization.

By analyzing under a Foucauldian framework a set of official materials about the nine-year fundamental education and the curriculum organization associated to it, Fabiana de Amorim Marcello and Maria Isabel Edelweiss Bujes offer us a completely different outlook in the text “Extension of fundamental education: which demands does it answer? Which rules does it follow? Which rationalities does it correspond to?” Based on studies developed in Sweden and in the USA, the authors discuss Brazilian official documents in which they observe the seizing of childhood in the name of something that presents and calls itself under the effigy of quality, and highlight the concepts of project-child and capable-child, discursive objects that emerge from the vacuum left by the logic of rescue – pointed out by the authors within this documentation – and from the mutually constitutive tensions between early childhood education and fundamental education.

In “Childhood and six-year-old children: challenges of the transitions in early childhood education and in fundamental education”, Sonia Kramer, Maria Fernanda R. Nunes and Patrícia Corsino discuss issues that permeate these stages of schooling on the basis of studies that focus on practices and interaction between children and adults in public institutions – crèches, early childhood education schools and school of fundamental education – in a capital city of the Southeastern region of Brazil. From the analysis of basic education policies in the context of the expansion of mandatory schooling and inclusion of six-year-olds into fundamental education, they describe results from these studies, focused on practices of orality, reading and writing, conducted between 2005 and 2008. They conclude by suggesting priorities for the pedagogical work in early childhood education and in the first years of fundamental education, for the formation of teachers and managers, as well as for the necessary transitions, always trying to see children as subjects of culture, as citizens of rights.

A second group of articles analyzes more localized situations or more specific themes. Flávia Pansini and Aline Paula Marin, in “The enrolment of six-year-olds in fundamental education: a study in Rondônia”, present results from an investigation carried out with eight out of the ten schools that comprised the state school system of the municipality of Rolim de Moura (RO) between 2007 and 2009, with the objective of knowing the conditions of

implementation of nine-year fundamental education. Based on data gathered from three sources – official documents, individual and collective interviews with teachers and coordinators, and photographic records – they conclude that the implementation “was hasty, lacking the preparation that would guarantee the necessary structural changes in the schools, the curriculum adaptations and/or discussions/creation of pedagogical teams, teachers and communities.” And, contrary to what was expected, the bringing forward of the entry of children into fundamental education, instead of contributing to a more successful schooling process, “could have predicted the failure experienced by a large fraction of children in their literacy process.”

In the article “Early childhood education and fundamental education: challenges and mistakes in the implementation of a new policy”, Bianca Cristina Correa contributes to the debate by offering information about the repercussions of the implementation of the legislation that brings forward the enrolment of children into fundamental education upon the work developed in early childhood education at a municipality located in the countryside of the state of São Paulo. Her reflections are supported by various sources collected through empirical studies conducted by the author and her students, apart from material obtained through observations protocols, fieldwork notebooks, and reports of supervised internships of Pedagogy students at early childhood education schools between 2008 and 2010. In her conclusions, the author emphasizes that the existing difficulties are being exacerbated, with the tendency of early childhood education becoming more school-like, which means that inadequate and widely questioned activities, such as the mechanical copying of letters and numbers, are likely to predominate. Early childhood education teachers, and those from fundamental education, suffer, along with the children, the consequences of the lack of information and integration between these levels of schooling, leading to “greater difficulty to understand the nature and specificity of the work with each age group” and to the intensification of “the difficulties of dialogue between the professionals belonging to these two segments of basic education”.

Following the trajectory of a group of children in their transition from early childhood education to fundamental education is the focus of the article by Vanessa Ferraz Almeida Neves, Maria Cristina Soares de Gouvêa and Maria Lúcia Castanheira. “The passage from early childhood education to fundamental education: contemporary tensions”, based on an ethnographic research of the school daily life at two institutions between 2008 and 2009, has as its axis the record of infantile experience, and revealed the need of better integration

between the playing and literacy in pedagogical practices of early childhood education and fundamental education, both of them central dimensions of contemporary child culture, according to the authors. The lack of dialogue observed in the organization of the Brazilian school system contributed to the troubled process experienced by the children studied in their passage from early childhood education to fundamental education, leading the authors to think about educative practices in which there would be a “playing literacy” or a “literate playing” in search of a relation of partnership between these two segments of basic education.

In “The deviant-literates, or on the education at the age of six” the reader will find an “invitation to deviate” made by Leni Vieira Dornelles. The author develops her thinking and arguments from a combination, relatively uncommon when dealing with post-structuralist studies, involving the analysis of official documents and participant observation of a first year class of the nine-year fundamental education at a public school in the outskirts of Porto Alegre (RS). She uses Foucault’s metaphor of the *Argos Panopticon* in the analysis of the documents “that order and organize the life of children and teachers through business and governmental programs” and opts for constructing the narrative from a special episode that marks the literacy process for this class. It is the case of one of its pupils who, despite not having the personal and social characteristics taken as the “naturalizing parameter of girl-subjects, or of those who have everything going for them in life, finds her own way to learn to read, and takes her group with her.” Apart from reviving, with Spinoza, the joy of the discovery, by describing how the children “among magic, desires and dance produced their literacy with such vitality, creation and turbulence, that they brought to the first year classroom the pleasure of learning”, the text allows questioning the normatizing tendency with regard to the search for solutions to the problems of schooling in this country.

The subsequent article presents results from the doctorate research of Flavia Miller Naethe Motta, which took as its subject the transformation “From children to pupils: social transformations in the passage from early childhood education to fundamental education”. The text articulates theoretical contributions from various authors and fields of knowledge, particularly Bakhtin, Vygotsky, Certeau, and Sacristán, and the field of the sociology of childhood, seeking to unveil the action of school culture upon children’s culture. The study, of ethnographic character, involved following up a group of children for two consecutive years: initially in a 3rd period class of early childhood education, when they were five years old, and then during the first year of fundamental education. Based on the important transformations caused by the children entering that level of schooling, the author argues that

“dealing with the children’s power allows us to see them not just as subjected to a disciplinary system, but as subjects that appropriate the elements of this system in order to reproduce them interpretively”. In a conclusion that dialogues with the previous article of this issue, Motta states that, if there is massive action from the school discipline transforming children into pupils, there is also their action in the direction of transforming the reality, recreating it according to their socio-cultural context.

“Teachers’ work and the development of symbolic activities: considerations for the nine-year fundamental education”, text by Ana Lúcia Horta Nogueira and Ingrid Thais Catanante, draws upon the international literature on the sociology of work to understand the teaching activity as historically situated and mediated, throwing light on excerpts from interviews with early childhood education and fundamental education teachers with the use of concepts such as those of prescribed, accomplished, and real work, of the individualization processes, of the weakening of the collective work, and of the fragmentation and amputation of acting. By revealing impasses and tensions in the conduction of this work, the authors point out that its origin would lie in the lack of definition of the social function of contemporary school with, in the transition under focus here, generates large questions about the way to deal with the development of symbolic activities and of written language. They conclude by proposing that, by conferring centrality to the work of the teacher, the need becomes evident of offering the elements necessary for he/she occupying the place of a real agent in the education process, thereby contributing to the organization of educational proposals that cater for the peculiarities and needs of six-year-olds.

Finally, a curriculum practice in which the ludic is associated with the literacy process in the first year of the nine-year fundamental education at the Application School of USP is presented in the article “Play and literacy: six-year-old children in fundamental education” by Tizuko Morchida Kishimoto, Mônica Appezzato Pinazza, Rosana de Fátima Cardoso Morgado and Kamila Rumi Toyofuki. Of a qualitative character, the research involved following up five first year classes of the nine-year fundamental education during the period between 2006 and 2010, with analysis of the teaching plan, records of children’s performance, interviews with parents, verbal testimonies from the children, teachers’ records, and reports from the toy library. Being aware that they are dealing with a specific situation, and that extending such practice to the whole group of public schools will require particular care with structural and pedagogical aspects, the authors stress the solutions found to implement a curriculum based on the ludic as an important activity for literacy, overcoming what they call

the “curriculum disarray” within the scope of policies for the expansion of fundamental education to nine years.

We note that three of these articles can be found in the online version of EDUCATION and RESEARCH (<http://www.scielo.br/>) fully translated into English: “The contribution of quality early childhood education and its impacts on the beginning of fundamental education”; “Extension of fundamental education: which demands does it answer? Which rules does it follow? Which rationalities does it correspond to?”; and “From children to pupils: social transformations in the passage from early childhood education to fundamental education”. Our expectation is that, each article in its own way, may be of interest to readers abroad, and contribute to the international debate about school and childhood.

We know that, by the end of this volume, it will not be easy to find finished answers, but we believe that we have offered to the reader a good sample of the rich and heated controversy involving the extension of the Brazilian fundamental education to nine years. With this special issue of EDUCATION and RESEARCH we hope to have contributed to advancing the debates and the search for solutions that will guarantee to all children in this country their right to access to education.

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