

Indiscipline and Power Relationships: a Historical Perspective in Brazilian Schools

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Abstract

This article refers to a documentary and historical research that we carried out using historical archives located in the State of São Paulo, Brazil. Our survey provided us with an amount of data that enabled us to look into the historical perspective of what would be the concept of indiscipline and behaviors that were either accepted or not accepted in educational institutions both by pupils and teachers. The research tried to discuss the concept of indiscipline and the existing rules and punishments, while taking into account the different historical, social and economic backgrounds in which they were prepared, as well as the political issues involved in the rules. The period of the survey data went from the late 19th century to year 2000. By considering that data come from an analysis of documents produced in the period, the methodology of data analysis used was the critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 2010; Fairclough, 2012). Critical discourse analysis is an analytic research method that seeks to understand and show the domination and inequality that are represented and reproduced by written texts in each social and political context.

As a conclusion, the punitive measures and rules that suppressed behaviors that were considered distractions from learning and that had a lot of behavior patterns that relate more to the preservation of the school institution than to education. In addition to the rules of pupils' behavior and punishments, the documents also established patterns of behavior and punishments to teachers, according to the moral concept and the political background, making it clear that there were control and imposition of a behavioral pattern for schools as a whole, therefore showing a culture of centralization in educational institutions.

Introduction

This article presents an analysis of the disciplinary rules in the Brazilian school, from a discussion on historical documents that referred to standards of conduct of students and teachers. The reflection part of the principle that the rules of behavior in the school institution is a reflection of the power relations that are established and relate also to the social planning of each historical moment.

The schools as institution can establish different ways to establish their rules and determine what is inappropriate behavior or indiscipline and such rules may only have the purpose of preserving the institution or may be due to a collective and democratic learning of its members.

The discipline of the bodies, as Foucault (2004), imposes on individuals limitations, prohibitions and penalties that are a reflection of the micro-powers that are present in the institutions and the school institution run to this rule. Discipline and indiscipline, in this context, are concepts which serve as a tool of control and domination, the relationships and generating the desired behaviors.

Thus, the management of the school and the relationships established in its interior can serve only to discipline in accordance with the rules laid down in advance or to expose the power relations and seek more democratic relations.

Historical documents on standards of conduct in schools: penalties and punishments

First, I highlight the public Education Regulations for enforcement of laws number 88, dated 1892 and number 169 dated 1893. In this document, the concept of school discipline included among other punishable behaviors, some rules that were considered to be "distractions" from the necessary learning, as provided by Article 81 below highlighted. The issue of "moral and good customs" was a point that was present both in the prohibitions and in the rationale for the punishments to be applied, as discussed below.

Art. 81: Pupils won't be allowed, in the school facilities, to be engaged with writing journals or any other types of activities that can distract them from their regular class activities, and they are prohibited from reading materials that are harmful to good costumes and their collegial duties.

Punishments to pupils included: Deprivation of some or all of their recreational activities; deprivation of their break time, with work, and pupils are obliged to write about a subject that is conducive to their

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intellectual and moral development; reprehension outside or inside the classroom; reprehension before a group of pupils; reporting pupils to their parents so that they are admonished; Exclusion from the Gymnasium.

Although there is a recommendation for "*parsimony*" in the application of punishments and the use of punishments that do not humiliate pupils, it can be seen that an admonishment before a group of pupils is a type of humiliation.

In addition to behavioral rules and pupil punishments, the document also established behavioral standards and punishments for teachers.

The Code of Public Education of the Province of São Paulo, dated 1857 refers to the form of assignment of the job of "sitting teachers", that they need *prove to be capable of the following capacities to the General Director: civil capacity; moral capacity; professional capacity*. Civil capacity is given by the *baptismal certificate or another legal certificate and the moral capacity is given by reports from the places where the applicant has lived for the last three years* or by the *parish priests of the parishes*. "Godoy (2005) points out that the Code of Public Education of Rio Grande do Sul also establishes, as a requirement the provision of a certificate of "good conduct" for a teacher to apply to a teaching position, which was usually provided by the parish priests of those places.

The absence of a legislation that would give access to positions by an exam, a methodology that was characteristic of bureaucratic institutions and that, as a principle, eliminated the nominations by appointment, caused teachers to "beg" to be appointed to the posts.

After reviewing the colonial period, we went to the 60s by emphasizing that the rules have not changed significantly from the 19th to the 20th century, as can be seen by Decree 47404/66 | Decree number 47404 of December 19, 1966 in São Paulo. Regarding the disciplinary regime, the document showed pupils the need for the respect for the good name of the school where they studied with irreproachable conduct and by fulfilling their duties as pupils. These duties were specified in Article 123 of Chapter 2 and basically referred to class attendance, tests, physical education, rehearsals, tours and official activities (parades and others); attention during classes, dedication and completion of the activities stipulated by teachers; respect for the authority of the headmaster and the school staff; providing an explanation for absences and showing the attendance card as required; wearing the school uniform or, if this was not compulsory, pupils *should present themselves clean and tidy*. Other rules included: respecting their classmates; sitting at the desk that was appointed by the teacher in the classroom; having their school materials in good condition; conserving the building, the school furniture and other school materials; preserving the order and cleanliness of the school facilities, having a disciplined and orderly conduct; probity during tests, exercises and others; indemnifying the school if they caused any damages to its objects or to classmates, teachers and staff; having an appropriate social behavior and raising the concept of the school where they studied.

Article 124 indicated what pupils were forbidden from doing some things including: entering or leaving their classroom or the school without permission of the teacher or administrators; doing, during an activity class, things that were not related to its purpose; collecting subscriptions or money without permission from the headmaster; forming a group or causing disorder in the schools or its vicinity; collective absences; preventing other pupils from entering the classrooms; bringing foreign materials to school; raising slanders or insults again classmates, teachers and staff, performing acts of violence; participating in movements that were hostile or disrespectful of the school, its subjects or authorities; committing acts against the morality and good costumes; disclosing issues that would involve the name of the school, teachers and staff without prior authorization; using materials from classmates without their consent; disrupting the attention of classmates during classes; leaving the school during a break or walking in the hallways during classes; writing on the walls, floors or other materials; smoking inside the school.

With regard to punishments, Article 125 established that not completing the school duties or a failure to comply with the prohibitions could cause: verbal admonition or reprimands in writing; suspensions for up to six days; compulsory transfer and expulsion from the school.

Because the first three could only be enforced by the headmaster, according to the severity of the situation, and the last two could only take place after an administrative process by the Board of Teachers. Pupils that were suspended could not participate in school activities and their parents would be notified of these situations.

What is seen is that it was not due to a lack of established behavioral rules and sanctions for noncompliance that conflict situations occurred. What can be noted, however, it that the school posed itself as the authority in charge of "watching and punishing" those who did not meet the rules, generally established by the agencies that were responsible for education.

Another document to be highlighted is Decree 10623/77 which approved the Common Regiment of the Schools of First Degree of the State of São Paulo and which defined that first grade schools were the ones which taught regular education from 1st to 8th grades.

According to that document, pupils were entitled to the conditions required to develop their full potential; respect for justice and freedom; optimal learning conditions with ample support from teachers and access to material resources. Also, the right to appeal when they did not agree with their test results; organize into associations and educational campaigns that were approved by the Headmaster; receive care and support when they did not have money resources; create petitions and file them.

One can note that there was some openness with a type of "watched" participation, in which pupils could be organized, but only for actions that were "approved by the headmaster."

It also provided the following duties to the pupils in its Article 62: helping to keep the school's prestige; being on time for activities and being an active participant; obeying the school rules and higher determinations; respecting the public servants and having an appropriate social behavior; using the school identification; conserving the school facilities, equipment and materials; not having materials that are foreign or dangerous to the school; having strict probity when performing tests and homework; submitting to school authorities the activities as a group or individually, in the school; strengthening the patriotic spirit and democratic accountability.

A failure to comply with these duties, could lead to reprimands including a suspension for up to six days for recurring cases, or compulsory transfer; such transfer should be decided by the teachers' council and the pupil would have a right to defense, if underage, by their responsible persons, the decision by the teacher committee should be sent to the School Committee.

When reviewing rules, regulations and policies focused on the disciplinary issue and school violence prevention, our research also reviewed the current proposals that have been submitted both by government agencies and other institutions. Such research was the subject of the article published in *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences Journal* (Adam & Scotuzzi, 2013)

The Code of Public Education of the State of São Paulo, dated 1857 in its chapter XII, on "pupils' punishments, and rewards", establishes punishments like: reprehension; notice to parents for additional punishment; moderate use of a paddle; expulsion from the school.

We can see that the rules established by public education agencies were very strict with respect to pupils' behavior. The issue of pupils' "moral" behavior, as well as the "efforts to educate" were issues that deserved not only rewards but also punishments that included the use of a paddle. Teachers were the ones awarding punishments and rewards, and they should be "discreet and fair."

The punishments described for "undisciplined" pupils have not changed significantly, except for the discontinuance of the use of the paddle. As we see, punishments were "reprehension; Notice to parents for additional punishment; moderate use of the paddle; expulsion from school."

Conclusions

What can be detached from the analysis of the documents is that the discipline of the bodies and the importance of obedience to the rules established by the school is reinforced in the documents, as well as the punishments laid down for the "unruly".

The school institution historically has as one of its tasks the discipline and obedience to the rules, but with the prospect of a more democratic management of relations, the discipline begins to be seen as a submission to the collective of school establishes as a rule, more participatory and democratic and not only from pre-established rules of the school. As I stated at the beginning of this article, at first, historicity of social processes modify the conceptions and practices, but the weight of tradition and culture of the institutions often maintain the same standards, hindering the advance.

Finally, it is observed that, despite the appreciation of the participatory processes in the present day, is predominant the disciplinary practices from the rules established unilaterally by the school, where the punishments have a privileged place. Such aspect highlights main objective is the preservation and non-institutional collective learning.

References

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