2.1. Education governance, autonomy and accountability

SP - (18868) - THE PILOT PROJECT FOR PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION (2016-2019) AS AN ANALYZER OF THE RECONTEXTUALIZATION OF IMPROVEMENT-ORIENTED POLICIES

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Short Abstract

The presentation is focused on the political processes of (re)contextualization, in Portuguese schools, of a policy pilot (2016-2019) that aimed to combat retention and dropout. Under the designation of 'Pilot Project for Pedagogical Innovation' (PPIP), it fostered the local level design and implementation of improvement-oriented school projects, involving political authorities and high-administration bodies that publicly challenged schools to be innovative in prescribed areas (e.g., curriculum diversification and management, curricular articulation, pedagogical innovation).

These governing orientations have for the late decades being put into practice as "inseparable policy measures" to undertake modernization and to reinforce performance in school systems (Verger, Fontdevila & Parcerisa, 2019). Following a political sociology of public action (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2007, Hassenteufel, 2008, Carvalho, 2015) the presentation represents policies as processes and results of the interventions (i) of public authorities, through mechanisms of normative production and executive involvement, and (ii) of multitude of other state and non-state actors, involved - with asymmetrical resources and legitimacy to act - at various scales of action (national, local, supranational) regarding the definition of the common good around which social activities in diverse areas of social life (economy, education, health, employment, etc.) should occur, and determining how such activities should be coordinated and controlled.

The presentation is based on data generated by an evaluative study of PPIP's processes and effects (Costa & Almeida, 2019) that were re-examined from a policy sociology perspective (Ozga, 2019), and aims to contribute to the understanding of contemporary governing processes, in education, whose leading purpose of school improvement is sought to be achieved through a combination of school autonomy and accountability.

Mixed methods (Creswell & Clark, 2017) were used and two complementary steps were comprised: qualitative, using archival research techniques and interviews to key informants involved in the PPIP (85 key-actors were interviewed – a DGE actor, school principals and deputy principals, PPIP coordinators, year directors, class directors, among others); quantitative, through a questionnaire applied to all teachers, students and parents covered by the PPIP (300 teachers answered, 2100 students and 1300 parents).

The results show PPIP as an example of the State's use of softer modes of governance, through the State 'validation' of the reflexivity of local actors, in a scenario marked by the persistence of a centralized regime for the administration of education, institutional and historically rooted, and the emergence of governing discourses and organized forms based on the value of results and on seeking to alter the ways in which the actors adjust to the circumstances of their social practices and how they perceive the problems of practice.

References

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