

School occupations, knowledge production and new strategies in defence of public education in Brazil

Débora C. Goulart

Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Guarulhos/São Paulo, Brazil:
debcgoulart@gmail.com

Fernando L. Cássio

Universidade Federal do ABC, Santo André/São Paulo Brazil:
fernando.cassio@ufabc.edu.br

Salomão B. Ximenes

Universidade Federal do ABC, São Bernardo do Campo/São Paulo, Brazil:
salomaoximenes@gmail.com

The uprising of secondary school students in the state of São Paulo (Brazil) is related to a type of collective action that, although recent, finds support in other anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist movements, with forms of action and organizational dynamic. For a long time, no social movement had expressed such power of mobilization, rupture and resistance in Brazil as the recent school occupations. This article revisits some aspects of resistance towards the policy of “school reorganization” in São Paulo, 2015–2016 and discusses the resistance strategies that emerged from the occupations, indicating a renewal of struggles for democratic education in Brazil. In particular, we examine the interaction between student movements, public universities and the justice system in the context of school occupations and consider how the fertile field of resistance and solidarity led to the emergence of the Public-School and University Network (REPU). The REPU proposes a closer relationship between public universities and movements for the struggle for public education, constituting a singular space for knowledge production and political action.

Keywords: Democratic Education; Social Movements; Educational Reforms; University

INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2015, public-school students in the Brazilian state of São Paulo occupied more than 200 schools as a protest against a “school reorganization” policy imposed by the state government which would have resulted in the closure of almost 100 schools and the compulsory displacement of hundreds of thousands of students and teachers. This student political movement, hereinafter referred to as school *occupations*, later spread across the country and triggered the greatest resistance movement to educational policies by students since Brazil’s 1980s re-democratization. The impacts of the 2015 school occupations are still visible.

This paper examines the rise of the Public-School and University Network (REPU), which emerged in the context of the 2015 school occupations. To do so, we begin by contextualizing the school occupations amid contemporary actions of resistance to the perverse effects of neoliberal politics in social organization and public policies. We then outline the phenomenon of school occupations that occurred in Brazil 2015–2016, discussing the main agendas and characteristics of the protests. We continue with describing the REPU, its emergence, characteristics, and dilemmas as a network of teachers and researchers who aim to produce knowledge and intervene in defence of public schooling and democracy. To deepen an understanding of the practice of this network, we present three of the network’s initiatives. In the final part of this paper, we discuss the current challenges facing educational research for and with social struggles, in defence of democratic and quality public education in.

NETWORKS, WAVES OF PROTEST AND THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT AS A WHOLE

Referring to the “Occupy Wall Street” movement, Davis (2012) stated: “if one erects a lightning rod, we shouldn’t be surprised if lightning eventually strikes” (p. 43). The spark that ignited school occupations in Brazil was set well before the birth of the young occupants of 2015 with the *First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle* on 1 January 1994, and the insurgency of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation against the *North Atlantic Treaty*. These events triggered a long period of resistance to neoliberal globalization, culminating in mass demonstrations and direct civil disobedience in several countries. These actions were characterized by a multitude of themes and the participation of diverse social sectors (Aguiton, 2002).

In this context, we consider the Brazilian school occupations as part of, what Barker (2014) calls, a “social movement as a whole,” thus removing definitions that often characterize social movements as “multiple and relatively isolated entities” (p. 7). In this sense, the occupation movements in Brazil are not the manifestation of a reified student movement, but a new factor, with significant repercussions:

A social movement is anything but a *homogeneous* entity. The image of a “network” is more suitable than that of an “organization” (Diani, 1992). Rather as *lacework* has multiple patterns, so also do movement networks: they consist of diverse groupings, organizations, individuals and the like, variously woven in relationships of cooperation and (sometimes) antagonism. (Barker, 2014, p. 9, original emphasis)

The heterogeneity of the movement’s social circles broadens the range of themes and specific patterns that move it but do not weaken it. The movement involves waves of protest that result from the relationship between demands from the various social spheres and can lead to the advancement or containment of struggles in complex historical dynamics. As a result, we argue, it is not possible to understand the dimensions of conflict as dissociated from class dimensions as presented in the dynamics of the protests.

There is a fairly established research tradition on social and union movements in Brazil, as well as an emerging research agenda that has gained attention shortly after the cycle of protests in 2013. However, as Tatagiba and Galvão (2017) point out, there is a lack of studies of social protest in the country. To address this gap, they adopt a perspective that “seeks to insert protests in the dynamics of capitalism, connecting the local and global dimensions” (Tatagiba & Galvão, 2017, p. 3). This usefully articulates the economic and

political dynamics of conflict amid the crisis of capital in the neoliberal context and their unfolding in Brazil. In another perspective, Alonso and Mische (2017) start from the approach of protest cycles, seeking to incorporate the cultural elements of the processes, mechanisms, and repertoires of collective action that characterize certain cycles.

Starting with the financial crisis of 2008, Tatagiba and Galvão (2017) describe how the crisis of representative democracy, together with policies of austerity in peripheral countries, were concomitant to struggles for the maintenance of social rights and struggles based on gender, race, and class. The democratic-popular project supported by Brazilian working-class organizations formed in the 1980s—Workers' Party (PT), Unified Workers' Central (CUT), and Landless Workers' Movement (MST)—underwent programmatic changes throughout the 1990s and adopted a pragmatic democratism (Martuscelli, 2007). Once in government, PT established alliances with big financial capital, medium capital, and large industrial and agrarian capital (Boito Jr., 2012), without breaking with the expectations of workers and the increase of social spending.

This reconciliation of interests from different class groups in progressive governments was not an isolated phenomenon in Brazil. Some elements of this Brazilian pragmatic democratism are observed in other Latin American countries which have adopted a notion of autonomy with emphasis on citizen participation through institutionalized and limited channels (Rey, 2011; Zibechi, 2008). Zibechi notes that the opening of such channels of participation was accompanied by the compliance of militancy to the state apparatus, which led citizen participation to oscillate between an unconditional support for the government and a weak confrontation with low adhesion. Zibechi further argues that social programs have become instruments to diminish the organizational capacity of movements whose increasingly fragmented demands forestall the elaboration of shared agendas with high capacity of mobilization.

Alonso and Mische (2017) recognize the sharing of an autonomist repertoire in diverse protests, such as Seattle, the Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement, and in the occupation of European public squares. They present forms of decentralized and horizontal organization, with consensus-based decision-making and prioritized direct actions (violent or not), including damage to state or private buildings and occupations against, in general, state agents and private corporations. There is also a strong combination of political and artistic elements, such as performances, images, games, music, and clothing.

In Brazil, a mass protest occurred in 2013, with a set of actions that culminated with the Days of June (*Jornadas de Junho*). They were initiated by the Free Ticket Movement (*Movimento Passe Livre, MPL*) and emphasized large demonstrations against the increase of public transport ticket prices. In all manifestations, especially in those convened by the MPL, there was a strong presence of university students and secondary school students, with the latter already organized as a result of the work for the formation of student unions developed by MPL in previous years (Spina, 2016). The struggles for education, with the significant presence of students, are an important part of this period of conflicts, not only in Brazil but also in Latin America, such as the assemblies in Oaxaca, Mexico, and the Revolt of the Penguins in Chile, both occurring in 2006.

The expansion of the student struggle was also taking place in Brazil. On the one hand, there was the arrival of young working-class sectors at higher levels of schooling, generating pressure for conditions of permanence and progress in studies. On the other hand, there was a greater demand for more skilled jobs. With the institutional breakdown

of 2016 due to the parliamentary coup against Dilma Rousseff (PT), a new agenda of attacks on social rights was launched, with the abandonment of the ambiguity of previous governments in favour of a clearly neoliberal agenda. The government measures that triggered the rise of student occupations included budget cuts, suspension of investments, wage arrears, and reduction of school curriculum. While resisting the presage and implementation of those measures, the school occupation movements assumed the proposition of new alliances, practices, and priorities, concretely producing a renewed vision of the right to education, constitutionally guaranteed in Brazil, and educational objectives, in opposition to the reductionist and technicist trends of educational reforms.

SCHOOL OCCUPATIONS: A NEW CYCLE OF STRUGGLES IN DEFENCE OF THE PUBLIC-SCHOOL IN BRAZIL

The triennium 2015–2017 saw the birth of an unprecedented dynamic of struggles in defence of basic public education in Brazil, resulting from the emergence of a non-bureaucratic student movement with new tactics, aimed at direct resistance to educational managerial reforms with an authoritarian, technocratic, or reactionary nature (Campos, Medeiros, & Ribeiro, 2016). Throughout the student mobilizations, there was a diffuse denunciation of poor teaching conditions and the precariousness of public schools complementing the local agendas.

On 9 November 2015, the first school occupation took place in the State of São Paulo. The mobilization peak was reached in less than a month, with 213 schools occupied. This process, which radically changed the educational debate in the country, began on 23 September 2015. At this time, students and school communities were surprised by a proposal of school reorganization that would close 94 schools and separate in single-cycle schools¹ another 754 school units, implying the forced displacement of some 311,000 students and 71,000 teachers in the state, as well as the dismissal of thousands of teachers with precarious employment contracts (Moraes & Ximenes, 2016).

The inconsistency of the official arguments and the lack of transparency about the criteria that led to the choice of schools to be reorganized or extinguished contributed to increased concerns and general discontent. According to the government, there were idle vacancies in schools. This assertion was based on the alleged reduction of about two million students over the last 17 years in the state school system—an argument later rebutted in two studies produced by the Public-School and University Network (Cássio, Crochik, Di Pierro, & Stoco, 2016; REPU, 2016). It was also argued by the Department of Education in the State of São Paulo (SEE-SP) that, “from the perspective of learning,” the separation of students into single-cycle school units would favour a superior performance in large-scale evaluations (SEE-SP, 2015). This study came to the public weeks after the announcement of the reorganization process and in response to dozens of critical manifestations from educational and research institutions, universities, teacher training institutions, and entities representing the educational field. Until then, it was a policy of enormous impact that, in addition to being decided unilaterally, had no technical

¹ Schools that serve a single cycle of Basic Education in Brazil: Initial Years of Primary Education (ages 6 to 10 years), Final Years of Primary Education (ages 11–14 years) and Secondary Education (ages 15–17 years). The São Paulo government argued, without any empirical basis, that children and adolescents would learn better in single-cycle schools, using elite private schools as a model for their claims. Most of the elite private schools in São Paulo, however, serve children and youth from Kindergarten to Secondary.

justifications. The study (Pó, Yamada, Ximenes, Lotta, & Almeida 2015), *Analysis of the public policy of School Reorganization proposed by the government of the State of São Paulo*, produced at the Federal University of ABC (UFABC) at the request of the Public Prosecutor, analysed the assumptions and conclusions of the official technical justification and identified the absence of scientific rigour. It presented elementary mistakes that resulted from an analysis based on a single performance variable—in this case, the number of cycles in each school—ignoring other elements widely documented in the educational field literature and that affect the results in external evaluations, such as the socioeconomic level of the students, the working conditions of the teachers, and the number of students per class.

Meanwhile, the student movement grew. For six weeks, between September and November 2015, the youth organized many street protests against the measures of reorganization, sometimes with the participation of families and teachers. There were more than 160 protests in at least 63 cities in the state. These first occupations influenced a large number of processes of struggle for public education in Brazil, with the occupation of thousands of schools in most Brazilian states (Costa & Groppo, 2018). By the end of November, the intensity of occupations increased and reached an average of eight new schools occupied per day, in a mobilization that attracted the attention of millions of people (Campos, et al., 2016). Unsurprisingly, the student movement triggered a forceful backlash from the government:

The reaction of the state government came soon enough, with intense mobilization of its judicial and police apparatus. The official declarations regarding the movement and the first judicial decision—which granted the repossession [of schools] on the night of November 12—indicated a common perspective concerning youth activism: Apeoesp [a teachers' union] would have been responsible for organizing and mobilizing students for occupations. This reading denotes the ambiguity in the socially established ways of treating youth activism: when young people do not mobilize, they are accused of being apathetic and individualistic; when they demonstrate, are accused of being manipulated by unions or parties (Corti, Corrochano, & Silva, 2016, pp. 1169).

The expansion of the student mobilization was able to alter the position of the judiciary in the analysis of the repossession actions proposed by the government. If the judges granted the eviction order at the outset, using the jurisprudence applicable to common possessory conflicts, the student resistance forced them to change their understanding: judges began to consider and decide in favour of the right to demonstrate, admitting the argument that students did not aim to take state property—the schools—but to resist a measure considered unfair and authoritarian (Tavolari, Lessa, Medeiros, Melo, & Januário, 2018). Therefore, the very right to demonstrate had hitherto been a crucial point of litigation.

According to Campos et al. (2016), one of the main characteristics of the mobilization was its heterogeneity: each school presented its own political dynamics. Secondaries received support and solidarity from different political groups—students, unions, partisan or popular movements—but they maintained the autonomous position throughout the whole process of mobilization. This autonomy, attention to public space and creativity in methods of struggle dismantled, at least in the first weeks, the apparatus of repression and enabled the movement to win the sympathy of broad social sectors. Measures taken by the students were determinant in this sense, such as occupying part of the hours previously

assigned to classes with study activities, lectures, debates, and public classes, collaborative food production and cleaning, and conservation activities of school buildings (Campos et al., 2016; Corti et al., 2016; Costa & Groppo, 2018). This helped to mobilize the sympathy of public opinion in favour of the students and against the excessive police violence recorded on the streets of large cities, especially in São Paulo.

The movement also countered the government's assumption that students would reflect a sense of non-belonging and even contempt towards the school and teachers. Instead, despite the precarious conditions of teaching and work in schools, the students maintained a positive relationship with the school and teachers (Campos et al., 2016). The prolonged occupation of the schools' space nourished with innovative significance the very meaning of what is public at schools. The resistance to the authoritarian and bureaucratic policy of the state government showed to the population that the school is not owned by the government on duty. If the state is responsible for ensuring adequate conditions for the functioning of schools, their quality also depends on their appropriation by the public, by teachers, students, families, and school communities. Occupations have shown that each school can be a unique experience, although focused on some common social goals.

Clean-up efforts and care for the maintenance and conservation of public assets contributed to a vision of the school as a space that is for students "by right." The contrast between spaces destined for all and the spaces restricted to the management, to which the students hardly had access in the school routine, raised questions about the management pattern in the state schools, the lack of transparency, and the lack of democratic and participatory management. They also claimed the existence of independent student unions, regular meetings of School Boards and Parent-Teachers' Associations (APM) for decision-making, as well as new channels for participation in school management, as indicated by the sources—students' reports and testimonies, photos and filmography of the events (Campos et al., 2016).

The occupations, at least in their first cycle, had significant victories. Through the school occupations in São Paulo, the main managerial education reform initiatives proposed in 2015 were defeated or postponed. The largest victory occurred on 4 December 2015, in São Paulo, Brazil's most populous state. An embarrassed governor, Geraldo Alckmin, in his fourth term and one of the leading cadres to apply for the Presidency of the Republic in 2018, announced the revocation of the school reorganization measures to the press (São Paulo, 2015), recognizing the defeat imposed by the occupations and the dozens direct actions of blocking streets and avenues. The success of the movement in São Paulo was almost immediately reproduced in the State of Goiás, in the Brazilian Midwest, where school occupations were instrumental in resisting the government-led pilot privatization of public schools. The goal was to transfer, in 2016 and 2017, hundreds of state public schools for the administration of private social organizations, which would directly hire all administrative staff and up to 80% of teachers without public competition; therefore, without tenure (Ximenes et al., 2018).

Victorious in their purpose of political resistance, the movements and tactics of struggle of the Brazilian students exploded as a reaction to authoritarian educational measures, not being:

[A] traditional negotiation along institutionalized paths or proposing an offensive struggle (to immediately claim "zero tariff" or "quality public education"), but to

stop government measures and break their technocratic discourse. (Januário, Campos, Medeiros, & Ribeiro, 2016).

From the earliest days of occupation, a broad and diversified agenda emerged from the experience of students and their interaction with educational movements. In the occupation movements that took place during those years, ‘negative’ and resistance purposes mixed with ‘positive’ purposes, and patterns of mobilization were diversified. Examples can be found in the school occupations in the states of Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, Ceará and in a new cycle of occupations in São Paulo, which occurred in 2016 (Ximenes et al., 2018).

THE PUBLIC-SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY NETWORK

On 3 December 2015, in a public hearing of the Public Ministry (the Public Prosecutor’s Office, MP-SP) and the Public Defender’s Office of the State of São Paulo, a group of professors and researchers from several discipline areas mobilized to contribute to the analysis of educational policies and to support the student resistance movement. The first study, published in early 2016, analysed the consequences of the reorganization and its suspension on the public-school system. Prior to this, even during occupations, the study by Pó et al. (2015) had been the first document to expose arguments against the government and its incipient support of school reorganization. Thus, the germ of what was to become the Public-School and University Network (*Rede Escola Pública e Universidade*, REPU) was launched.

REPU was created with the aim of producing research that could debunk the government’s justifications for the schools’ reorganization proposal and, thus, strengthen the students’ movement. Since then, REPU has been dedicated to producing studies, research, and interventions aimed at expanding and advancing the debate on the quality of education in the state education system, in line with the major issues of national education. The participants share the understanding that the knowledge produced at the university should be integrated into the movement of society, and continuously dialoguing with it. Thus, in order for this knowledge to have some influence on political action and social struggle, it is necessary to reduce the traditional gap between the timing of the research production and the timing in which political struggles unfold.

The first meeting of REPU was held in February 2016 and sought to discuss and shape expectations. Together, the participants of the REPU defined that the group’s priority task would be to systematize the available knowledge, to identify gaps, and to contribute to movements and public opinion (also by the media), establishing a qualified debate with the student and teacher movements, the Public Ministry, the media, education movements, and the government. Currently the network has monthly work meetings which are open and have the participation of professors of universities and public schools. The network has also held larger scientific and mobilization-oriented meetings. These have been spaces for the exchange of impressions, experiences, formulation of hypotheses, data exposition, research reports, and have enhanced the understanding of the processes in which educational policies designed outside of school contexts materialize. These meetings provided materials for the elaboration of numerous investigations within REPU, built in partnership with research groups in the universities and with the participation of teachers of the state public schools. Published as scientific

articles, several REPU studies were pre-released in the form of technical notes, press articles, and folders that circulated in schools and teacher unions.

The strategies for the dissemination of studies and research are a permanent challenge for the REPU. Particularly, the acceleration of the research timing cannot sacrifice methodological rigour in the production of results, given the purpose of such results to influence concrete political struggles in schools. The participation of people from different fields of knowledge in REPU contributes to reducing the time of accomplishment of larger qualitative and quantitative studies.

Mirroring the secondary school students that rebelled against the reorganization in 2015 and are currently organized against the reform of secondary teaching, REPU also diversified its research and strategies. Another of REPU's permanent challenges in the production of research is to access public data (Cássio & Stoco, 2017; Travitzki & Cássio, 2017) so that it can analyse trends rather than only react to government policy, and, thus, together with movements for public education, build proposals that are increasingly collective and rooted in school communities and practices. In this sense, the decision on a particular strategy to advertise the product of our research means much more than a timely decision on how best to publicize them to reach the public. Here we find one of the most important tensions in the internal debates of REPU: do we want to produce educational research for social struggles or with social struggles? In other words, it is a question of identifying topics and approaches to research in the educational struggles, returning research results to movements and to the academic community at the end or during the process. At the same time, it is a question of mobilizing the instruments and the academic discourse to propose guidelines of action with the movements.

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN MOTION: THREE SELECTED EXAMPLES

There is an important and common trait among the participants of REPU, which probably answers to its constant relationship with the reality of public schools: all have, in their professional trajectory, experienced the public-school that today we seek to understand through research. We were students trained in basic education in public schools, we were teachers in these school systems, and we participated in trade unions and social movements. Many of us now work in teacher training courses, mentoring future or current educators in undergraduate and graduate courses. Others continue to work in basic education in public schools. Largely, our professional trajectories accumulate one or more of these elements, wrought in the concreteness of social struggles for public education, free of charge and with quality. This individual characteristic generates a collective feeling that it is not sufficient to produce high quality research with delivery times that are almost unattainable amid the routine of university work. It is also necessary to fight alongside students, teachers, families and school communities. The different strategies adopted for the dissemination of REPU studies clearly reflect this tension.

As a first example, the technical note on school reorganization (REPU, 2016) was publicized at a press conference on 28 June 2016. The conflict and doubts about a possible veiled continuation of the school reorganization process, which had been forbidden by the courts, led us to decide on this form of broadcasting of the technical note. In summary, the note pointed to the inconsistency of the information provided by the state regarding the data that had justified the reorganization attempt, which was later suspended because of the students' mobilization. In fact, as shown, the alleged demographic reduction was

not compatible with the proposal of massive closure of classrooms and there was a deliberate increase in the number of students per class, causing damages to the functioning of schools. Finally, the REPU study showed that schools that would be extinguished by the end of 2015 had a greater number of classes and shifts eliminated in 2016, which could represent an intention to phase out these school units, a veiled reorganization (REPU, 2016). In the five days that followed the press conference, 21 articles were published in the Brazilian press, half of them in outlets of national circulation. Responding to the journalists, SEE-SP stated that the thesis of the study was absurd, without pointing out any methodological inconsistencies. From the point of view of publicizing and qualifying the public debate, the strategy adopted was a success; REPU became a well-known name, searchable in Google. From the point of view of an effective contribution to the fronts of struggle in schools, many internal doubts remained.

The second example is the dissemination of the first results of the research on the Integral Teaching Program (PEI) (Giotto & Cássio, 2018), made in an open meeting on 21 October 2017, the objective of which was to define strategies for propagating the results in schools. The study demonstrated that the aforementioned government policy generated stark socio-spatial and educational inequalities in the school system. Based on the evaluation that the previous press conference had not produced the expected results in schools, the idea of convening another conference would only be carried out after conducting a basic work of research dissemination within unions, students, and social movements. It was decided to edit an illustrated brochure containing a condensed version of the study results for circulation in schools. The brochure was widely distributed through the REPU communication channels but did not generate the immediate response that had been obtained in the process of disseminating the technical note on the school reorganization policy. Because the PEI is an educational policy that began in 2012 and is gradually implemented, the announcement of the study did not find a large public demand at that time. However, the progressive implementation of the policy, with the expected effects of generating educational inequalities, generated demands for the dissemination of these results in schools as the PEI is being implemented.

Our third example is the performance of the REPU against the attempt to implement a Social Impact Bond (SIB) in the São Paulo state public-school system, an unprecedented public-private partnership modality in Brazil. As in the case of the reorganization, the implementation of the SIB was published in the newspapers. The first movement of REPU was to produce a press article (Ximenes, Cássio, Carneiro, & Adrião, 2017) on 29 November 2017, questioning the essential assumptions of the SIB—ethical, political, administrative, and legal—from the document released by the government (SEE-SP, 2017a). We then made an official request for information to the government, obtaining the administrative process (SEE-SP, 2017b) that served as the basis for the elaboration of a second illustrated brochure, whose main circulation occurred in the sub-headquarters of the Teachers' Union of Official Teaching in the State of São Paulo (Apeoesp), whose schools were directly involved with the implementation of that policy. This was only possible because the schools' list was included in the administrative process. The result, from several meetings in the trade union sub-headquarters with researchers from REPU, was that numerous schools reconsidered the decision to join the project. The proximity of the electoral period in 2018 and the risk of political erosion for the presidential candidacy of Alckmin led the government to suspend the implementation of the SIB in

2018. With a clear incidence of REPU's work, the fight against SIB in schools resulted in a concrete, even if partial, political victory.

Looking at the three examples in perspective, we see that the accumulated experience has modified the strategies and actions of REPU. In the case of the SIB, the initial step was to establish a point of dissent in the press, which bears similarities to the strategy of dissemination of the study on school reorganization in 2016. Likewise, the experience of producing printed materials for dissemination to schools and unions, with the advantage, in this case, that the SIB was an educational policy with punctual and abrupt implementation, such as school reorganization. The clamour for debates about the SIB in the affected schools sealed the success of the strategy to bring the REPU's investigations closer to the school communities.

In this last example, it is unclear whether the study was conducted for social struggles or with them, since a good part of the research (Cássio, Goulart, & Ximenes, 2018) was produced during the process of struggle against the policy within schools and teacher unions via *WhatsApp* groups and in the delivery of leaflets in schools. It was with the experience of the SIB that we perceived the formation of a collaborative network in which it was no longer possible to differentiate research subjects and researchers. Clearly, here, political action imposed the timing of the investigation and put us into action. The great receptivity of the SIB study in schools also served as a measure of the diffusion of our previous work. Many people already knew the REPU productions about school reorganization and the PEI, although we ourselves did not know the reach of these studies.

Although the investigations of REPU are not properly at the service of the movements, it is through the strong interaction with them that one can pick up some clues of the governmental action in the dynamics of the educational policy. The following indications have guided us: to know the mundane practice of politics in the daily life of schools and in the subjects' resistance; to construct powerful explanations and solid arguments; and to establish dialogues with various sectors interested in education. More than building bridges between the university and schools for the dissemination of socially relevant research results, the accumulation of experiences of the REPU has led us to increasingly produce (co)adjutant knowledge in the political struggles of basic education—educational research as social struggle.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

The uprising of the secondaries in São Paulo is related to a type of collective action that, although recent, finds support in other movements of this century, especially those of anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist character that question the supremacy of the market, its institutions and the limited action of progressive governments. Its forms of action and its dynamics of organization are constantly changing, inspired by the autonomist repertoire: self-organization, horizontality. and spontaneity in action.

No social movement had expressed as much power of mobilization, rupture, and resistance in Brazil as school occupations. The marks of the period are now rooted in the debates of educational policies in Brazil, whether in the attempts of appropriation of the student uprising and de-characterization of its agenda by business movements that sponsored the recent curricular reforms—in particular the reform of secondary teaching (Bill no. 13.415/2017)—or aggravation of other clashes in the educational field, with the

change of scale and the nationalization of state repression against students after 2015 (Tavolari, Lessa, Medeiros, Melo, & Januário, 2018; Ximenes et al., 2018).

The new movements to resist authoritarian educational reforms and to defend a democratic education demanded the construction of new intelligibilities to better understand political and policy processes. Without a genuine effort to operate in new logics, it is not possible to think of strengthening the mobilization for a democratic education in Brazil today in which an accelerated process of managerial reform and privatization imposes a new and decisive phase of challenges for the defence of the public school. Three current regressive governmental measures are worthy of attention.

The first is the *Constitutional Amendment no. 95/2016*, which creates the “public spending ceiling.” It prohibits the expansion of public investments for 20 years and, in the case of education, suspends for the same period the most elementary constitutional guarantee of public funding for education in Brazil: the federal minimum spending of 18% of tax revenue on education (Pinto, 2016). The second is the reform of secondary education, a measure of elitist and reactionary bias that reintroduces official segregation in the basic education curriculum in order to contain the demand for expanded access to higher education through the differentiation between a propaedeutic and a technical and vocational training for the majority of students (Cunha, 2017). The third is the recent approval of the Brazilian National Common Core Standards, which standardizes curriculum objectives. Such standardization, in turn, goes against the demands of students for greater democratic participation in the definition of curriculum within each school as a component of the democratic management of education (Cássio, 2018; Lima, 2013).

In the face of counter-reforms that advance the neoliberal elements in education, we see a concomitant process of building resistance struggles that is part of the development of multiple influences among movements, protests, and activism, and which have energized the struggle for public education in Brazil in recent years. Articulated within the movement as a whole, REPU is itself a knot, part of a process of building social struggles that attempts new ways of confronting governments and the capital in education, in actions carried out outside of institutionality and based on horizontal relationships and the autonomist repertoire, disruptive of the already consolidated propositional spaces.

The dichotomy of educational research for social struggles/with social struggles is being supplanted as channels of dialogue and exchange are built based on trust and with convergent objectives; being the main one to fight policies that intensify educational inequalities. The work in networks, not based on institutions, entities or constituted groups but on agents emerged from the immediate struggle—and combined with others already established—expands the possibility of political struggles in which the interaction and the autonomy overlap with the hierarchy and the flow of actions. In this movement, REPU presents itself as a unique space for the production of knowledge and for political action in the educational struggles in Brazil, with the desirable side effect of increasing the social relevance of our public universities.

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