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# Graduate studies and research about/in basic education<sup>I</sup>: relations and propositions

Antonia Almeida Silva<sup>II</sup>

Márcia Aparecida Jacomini<sup>III</sup>

## Abstract

This study is about the basis of relations between graduate studies and basic education such as set forth by *Plano Nacional de Pós-Graduação* [National Graduate Plan] 2011-2020 (PNPG). It is a documental study associated with quantitative/qualitative data analysis regarding academic production, whose *corpus* are theses and dissertations in graduate programs ranked by Capes with a grade equal to or higher than 5, in the period 2000-2010. They are: PUC/RJ, PUC/RS, PUC/SP, UERJ, UFES, UFF, UFG, UFMG, UFPEL, UFPR, UFRJ, UFRGS, UFRN, UFSCar, UFU, Unesp/MAR, Unicamp, Unimep, Unisinos, USP. The article is organized in three analytical axes: panorama of graduate policies designed by *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* (CAPES) [Coordination for Higher Education Personnel Improvement]; guidelines for basic education which appeared in PNPG 2011-2020; academic production regarding educational policies in the period 2000-2010 and virtual contributions to understand the reality of basic education. The analysis of the academic production or education graduate programs turned out to be strategic both for the studies in the field of educational policies and for its agenda, allowing to problematize the diagnostics of scarce accumulation of knowledge in education. It became patent that much of what has been produced is intended to comprehend educational reality in Brazil, focusing mainly on basic education.

## Keywords

Graduate studies – Basic education – Academic production.

**I-** Translator's note: In Brazil, *educação básica* (basic education) stands for early childhood, primary and secondary education.

**II-** Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana, Feira de Santana, BA, Brasil.  
Contact: antoniasilv@gmail.com

**III-** Universidade Federal de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brasil.  
Contact: marciajacomini@uol.com.br

# ***A pós-graduação e a pesquisa sobre/na educação básica: relações e proposições***

Antonia Almeida Silva<sup>I</sup>

Márcia Aparecida Jacomini<sup>II</sup>

## **Resumo**

*O presente estudo problematiza as bases das relações entre a pós-graduação e a educação básica tal como formuladas no Plano Nacional de Pós-Graduação 2011-2020 (PNPG). Trata-se de estudo documental associado à análise de dados quantitativos/qualitativos sobre a produção acadêmica, tendo como corpus teses e dissertações defendidas em programas de pós-graduação conceituados pela Capes com nota igual ou superior a 5, no período de 2000-2010, a saber: PUC/RJ, PUC/RS, PUC/SP, UERJ, UFES, UFF, UFG, UFMG, UFPEL, UFPR, UFRJ, UFRGS, UFRN, Ufscar, UFU, Unesp/MAR, Unicamp, Unimep, Unisinos, USP. O texto está organizado em três eixos de análise: panorama das políticas para pós-graduação desenhadas a partir da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (Capes); diretrizes para a educação básica que figuram no PNPG 2011-2020; produções acadêmicas sobre políticas educacionais no período de 2000-2010 e possíveis contribuições para a compreensão da realidade da educação básica. A análise sobre a produção acadêmica dos programas de pós-graduação em educação revelou-se estratégica tanto para os estudos na área das políticas educacionais, quanto para a sua agenda, permitindo problematizar os diagnósticos da escassa acumulação de conhecimento em educação. Evidenciou-se que muito do que se tem produzido está voltado para o entendimento da realidade educacional brasileira, tendo a educação básica como foco principal.*

## **Palavras-chave**

*Pós-Graduação – Educação básica – Produção acadêmica.*

**I-** Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana, Feira de Santana, BA, Brasil.  
Contato: antoniasilv@gmail.com

**II-** Universidade Federal de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brasil.  
Contato: marciajacomini@uol.com.br

## **Paradigmatic fabrics of graduate studies: from development to innovation<sup>1</sup>**

The National Graduate System was created in the 1950s and, initially, had the mission of qualifying university professors. However, this mission was gradually enhanced and new meanings were added to in policies designed for this sector, which were unified by the paradigms of agendas for the national development, as can be noticed in PNPG 2011-2020 retrospect. Thus, the plans were marked with an effort to harmonize the orientations by absorbing previous legacies and by incorporating dominant socioeconomic paradigms.

PNPG 1 (1975-1979) is referred to as landmark in the planning and vector to overcome spontaneity and, as such, was part of policies for social and economic development set forth by the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Development Plan (PND), through the Sectorial Plan for Education and Culture (PSEC) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Basic Plan for the Scientific and Technological Development (PBDCT), in the period 1975-1980. This plan chose two great goals: 1) provide training for researchers, teachers and professionals; 2) “forward and implement research projects by technically advising the productive system and the public sector” (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 25), and the Ministry of Education was in charge of the former goal and the letter was to be shared among other government bodies. From this plan on, Capes arose as an agency for reviewing and assessing graduate programs focusing on teacher education (KUENZER; MORAES, 2009).

PNPG 2 (1982-1985) maintained the objective of training human resources but added the advocacy of quality in higher education and the core role played by assessment.

In turn, PNPG 3 (1986-1989) sought to articulate the 1st Development Plan for the New

Republic, whose objective was the *national autonomy*, where technology was seen as a condition for that goal.

Within this perspective, the main emphasis of this plan was in the universities doing research and integrating graduate studies to the science and technology system.

[...]

The objectives of this plan were:

- to consolidate and improve the performance of graduate courses;
- to institutionalize research in the universities to ensure the functioning of graduate schools;
- to integrate graduate studies to the productive sector. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 26, our emphasis).

After this series of plans and an interval of approximately seven years, in 1996 the PNPG 4 proposal started to be outlined, and the National Seminar do Discuss Brazilian Graduate Studies was an important landmark of such attempt, as an instance of mobilization, discussion and settlement of some references. Notwithstanding the initiative, it happened that, for a number of reasons, including the budget, the plan's final document was not written, but its recommendations were implemented by Capes Board of Directors, such as: “expand the system, diversify the graduate studies model, change the assessing process, and the transition of Brazilian graduate studies to the international level”. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 29)

Only after over a decade upon the frustrated attempt to institute this plan, a new proposal took shape by means of PNPG 2005-2010.

The main objective of PNPG 2005-2010 was the equitable growth of the national graduate system, with the purpose of meeting with quality the several demands of society, aiming at the scientific, technological, economic, and development

<sup>1</sup>- A preliminary version of this article was presented at a round table in the 21st Educational Research Meeting in the North and Northeast (EPENN), in 2013, under the title *Graduate studies and basic education: from political biases to academic production*.

of the country. This Plan also had the objective of providing subsidies to formulate and implement public policies for education, science, and technology. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 29)

The horizon of equitable growth enhanced, within the plan, the need to tackle asymmetries that were not only regional but also between the priority research programs, which led to define agendas guided by *induction* either in *areas of knowledge* (Bio-nanotechnology, Pro-Botany, Pro-Science of the Sea) or in *strategic areas* (Pro-Engineering, Digital TV, Pro-Defense). Inducing programs was undertaken as a programmatic line, whose goal was the rise of partnership networking with the involvement of different actors (funding agencies, entrepreneurs, universities), as can be noted in the following statement:

Specific Strategic Programs are those conceived by the agencies, upon consultation with the universities, the research institutes, the entrepreneurial sector and other actors concerning the national development, with the objective of resolving each type of asymmetry observed. Designing such programs should be preceded by reviewing priorities and competences, backed up a new budget and feasible by differential programs with due instruments and for a defined length of time. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 30).

Improving the graduate system in this horizon is connected with the training of high-level human resources, considering the strong bond between training and the development project devised, as the very document sets forth: "The Brazilian industrial policy demanded corporations to invest in high-level resources, trained by the graduate programs" (BRASIL, 2010a, p.31), impacting the design of programs, as in the case of the types of funding, redefining the

role of Master's degrees (creation of professional master's programs), in addition to incentives to distance/online education projects. Compared to the former plans, the emphasis on the training for teaching and research activities turned into a new objective: "the training of officials for non-academic markets" (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 33). This includes both the training of staff for private businesses as well as for the government bodies and, collaterally the acquisition of titles by non-governmental organizations and social movements is also mentioned.

But induction is not merely aimed at organizing strategic programs. The 2005-2010 plan also highlighted the improvement of control mechanisms, since the 1990s, rooted in the national assessment policy<sup>2</sup>. As a result, aspects even more specific of assessment, especially for the humanity areas were included, such as:

introducing qualitative assessment processes for the products of doctoral and master programs, including products so far sub-evaluated, such as: the books, in the Humanities; patents e technologies, in the relevant areas and, particularly, in the case of professional master programs, the destination taken by former students. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 38).

As part of the movement to induce strategic programs and control policies, *basic education*<sup>3</sup> was assigned in the horizon of the 2005-2010 plan, a not very flattering reinforcement, as can be noted in the following quotation:

Considering the meager qualification of the basic education teachers, mainly in elementary school, it was necessary that the

**2-** According to the PNPG three elements characterize the assessment system of graduate studies in Brazil: 1) it is conducted by peers who are acknowledged by their intellectual reputation; 2) meritocratic nature in the disciplinary fields; 3) association between recognition and funding, which is the ground to define criteria to allocate money to the graduate programs.

**3-** Translator's note: In Brazil, *educação básica* (basic education) stands for early childhood, primary and secondary education.

graduate programs engaged in educational research to *find the best methods and techniques for distance/online education which allowed qualified training of teachers in service*, taking advantage of the successful initiatives occurring in the country. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 34, our emphasis).

As formulated, the relationship between training and the development of teaching methods and techniques regains, once more, the prescriptions of technocratic conceptions, looking for low-cost isolated solutions, without an accurate assessment of the complex socio-educational reality. It was noted that, along that period, as PNPGs attempted to keep some harmony between a plan and the next, they also moved their paradigms leaving the focus on development toward the focus on innovation.

According to this orientation, we positioned the very PNPG 2011-2020, which, undertaking the legacy of the previous plans, distinguishes itself from them by taking an agenda that enhances the link between the production of knowledge in graduate studies and market interests, under the heading of innovation. Situated as new paradigm, innovated is advocated as higher threshold in relation to its former level, the paradigm of development. The text reads as follows:

The concept of innovation is generally correlated to research and development (R&D), however it is different and broader. Innovation entails not only technology, machinery and equipment, but it also goes beyond to envisage incremental changes, new functionalities as well as improvements in management or new business models, associated with attracting or creating new markets.

Connections between science and technology (S&T) with technological innovation has a more obvious face in regard of the world of manufacturers. However, it should be considered that

currently, between half and three-quarters of the wealth produced in planet is the outcome not of the production of physical things, products, but instead of providing services. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 180).

The plan argues that “Brazil has a real opportunity to become the fifth world economic power in the next decade” (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 157) and, saying it loud and clear, the lack of workforce appears as “the only obstacle that can be place in the way of this huge success” (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 157), considering that the average schooling level of Brazilians is very low. Although this diagnostics is correct, it is striking to notice the lack of mediation between history, politics, the broader socioeconomic reality and education, and once more education is seen as a determiner of the relations and conditions of life in capitalist societies, in detriment to the fact that this position is conditioned by those relations. Again and again we cannot help noticing there is a reproduction of the merely economic-oriented interpretations which insist on validating the educational policies based on the expectancies of their impacts on the development of capital, this time under the sign of innovation.

In the statements presented in the second volume of the plan, which includes subsidiary texts written by experts, this is noted by the very choosing of the topics covered in it. The text by Schwartzman (2010) is representative of that, as the author says that the new plan is characterized by the transition from the system whose center is Capes towards “a more open and decentralized” system (SCHWARTZMAN, 2010, p. 34). Following the arguments, it is clear that this opening means making the mechanisms of approval/assessment of courses more flexible, providing more room for the private institutions, and at the same time revising the forms of funding both for research and for the students. It is then settled by this kind of statement the choice for a market policy and, within this framework, there is the striking

fact that, in the same volume 2, the only text focusing education is devoted to professional education, named “Propositions on professional education on the graduate level for the PNPG 2011-2020”, by Fischer (2010). In it, the author assumes the relationship between the strategic plans for the national development and the qualification of the workforce.

Within this movement, the workforce qualification was enhanced as the common keynote of training from basic education to graduate studies. Considering a positive panorama of the National Graduate System (SNPG), in the face not only of its growth but of its results. The plan stresses the entry of Capes into basic education as a strategy to face the problems in this level of schooling, pleading the interdependency between the levels and stages as founding elements of the Brazilian educational organization.

It is therefore based on these referents that the relationship between graduate studies and basic education is framed in PNPG 2011-2020. In the next item, we will examine some aspects of such relationship.

### **The guidelines of the graduate policy for basic education**

The plan is supported by different sources which corroborate the diagnostic that the average schooling level of Brazilians is very low, namely: data from the National Research by Household Sampling (PNAD) 2007, according to which the schooling level of the population aged 15 or older corresponds to a medium value time of 7.3 years; the document named “Teaching Science and Basic Education: proposals to overcome the crisis”, by the Brazilian Academy of Science; the document released by the Economic and Social Development Council, which presents indicators regarding stages and modes of schooling; the outcome of tests applied by the International Student Assessment Program (Pisa) and its confirmation of the low quality in basic education; the report “Situation

of Childhood and Teenage in Brazil 2009 – The Right to Learn: potentiate advancements and reduce inequalities”, produced by Unesco, with a report on the achievements associated with access, but also indicating aspects to be tackled, especially the inequalities:

[that are] regional, ethnical/racial, socioeconomic and also those related to the inclusion of disabled children; in addition, there is a record that service and care is still insufficient for children up to 5 years old in child education and for teenagers between 15 and 17 years old in high-school. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 159).

Among the strategies to tackle such scenario is the Education Development Plan (PDE) which is taken as the core vector to correct problems, a poor disguise for the self-satisfaction with the policies that were induced through this instrument. The excerpt reads as follows:

Studies conducted by various sources have found that a great effort is being made by educational managers in the three spheres of Government in order to improve the quality of the education systems. This effort envisages actions to improve educational management, the betterment of school facilities, the building of day care centers and schools, laboratories and libraries, expansion of school meals, the improvement of school transportation and teacher training. Contribution to improve the situation has also come from the creation of FUNDEB, establishing the National Wage Level for teachers, the career guidelines and establishing IDEB. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 163).

It is not indicated, however, which are the studies mentioned nor which are the effects of such *efforts* on reality, that is, whether and how it is possible to perceive



relations between these actions and changes in the configuration of education, in the light of the diagnostics presented. But, despite the enthusiastic reference to PDE, even if without presenting data to support it, PNPG reiterates the impact of graduate programs to the purpose of overcoming problems. Thus, the need for studies is announced:

Scale the true size of the problem and the challenge, clarify the causes of failure and *indicate short-, medium, and long-term solutions* to improve the quality of basic education. There are many topics that must be studied. Without prejudice to other topics of research, we highlight as follows some of them which seem more obvious. They are:

1. to characterize the minimum quality standard mentioned in article 206 of Brazil's Federal Constitution;
2. to train and value education professionals;
3. the achievement from learning and to ensure the right to learn;
4. the 'definition' of objectives for basic education in the face of the increased school responsibilities;
5. the management of schools and school systems;
6. to define responsibilities and establish the procedures for cooperation. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 166, our emphasis).

If we keep in mind the harmonization logic that has been permeating the prior PNPGs, we will see that induction is not a guideline lost in time as it is being consolidated by means of this kind of orientation. Here it is worth to think about the expectancy that the graduate programs will *indicate short-, medium-, and long-term solutions*, but also about the very contents of the statements associated with the topics listed above.

About the questions the document raises in regard of graduate programs it is important

to note that the plan suggests to assume a more professional orientation and "not restricted to the training of teachers/professors and researchers" (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 216). Thus the plan pleads that

the evaluation of proposals of new [graduate] programs for applied science should absorb parameters to encourage partnerships with the extra-academic sector, envisaging the generation of technology and qualified human resources intended for the business, service and governmental sectors. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 295).

In such statement, we notice the subtle opposition between the academic approach and applied research. If the latter prevails, the university tradition as a place of free thinking, creation, production of ruptures and possibilities of the new will be compromised by some pragmatism, sometimes market-oriented, in what is done, how it is done and what is yielded.

Regarding the topics listed, the analyses about each of them do not clash with the innovation paradigm aforementioned. In relation to teacher training, for example, the keynote is an invitation to "re-think teacher education so that teachers may face the new and diversified tasks they are trusted with" (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 169) and although it does not clearly indicate, at once, the meaning of the text, this will be clarified as we go on and further and compare this topic with the remaining subjects.

It is interesting to note concerning the learning performance that the analysis of PNPG insists on explaining such data based on the relationships taking place within the school, more specifically, the teacher's pedagogical adequacy. Thus, upon contextualizing the problem from the viewpoint of socioeconomic and cultural diversity of students, it concludes that:

The difficulties found by the school to guarantee the permanence of youths and the low levels of learning achieved lead



us to believe that high-school is a stage of basic education where *the inadequacy of pedagogical procedures seems to increase*. Traditional practices conducted in the classroom are unable to compete with the new media which absorbs most of the time of young people. The amount of information generated and spread on a daily basis and the increasing presence of technology in the life of students constantly challenges the information teachers bring to the classroom and indicate an urgent need to change the procedures currently utilized. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 172, our emphasis).

Concerning the definition of objectives, the naturalization of the alleged new responsibilities of the school is striking, namely, “*care for the cases of domestic violence, sexual abuse, exploitation of child labor, lack of health care, among other demands*” (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 173, our emphasis). Admitting that there are disputes between what the school community thinks and other sectors of society, the document brings more controversial statements when it indicates the task to be taken by graduate programs to study the reality and propose solutions. In an excerpt it advocates that “a starting point for this study may be *to identify the expectancies* involving the activities that should be done by the school. To this end, it is necessary to listen not only to the teachers but also the school community” (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 173, our emphases). In addition to highlighting the identification of expectancies it must also be mentioned the idea that the school must meet the interests of teenagers and youths who are the subjects of basic education, particularly in high-school, but such proposition is not accompanied by a clear definition of the interests at stake. One then wonders: what if the interest is characterized by the immediate view of the students or their family, should the school just bow to such interests? Who is supposed to problematize the concepts, the prejudices and the very limitations of views formed by the

media and other vectors that on a daily basis tell us what to eat, what to wear, what music to consume, in short, how to constitute one self *in* in the consumerist society? It seems to us, therefore, that it is not so simple as it appears to establish a linear association between the student’s interest and the challenges endured by basic education.

Thus, the phrase ends up disregarding the necessary relationship between the expectancies generated and world and education views, as if such expectancies resulted only from the condition of being a teacher or a member of the community. This shows not only a comprehension that despises the debates in the area and its contributions to think the present, but mainly the force of habit to make the discussion politically void.

Thus, in another excerpt, regarding the contents and procedures to be adopted by the schools, the document sees as mere *uncertainties*, to be resolved by the graduate studies, the contradictions between the teachers’ conceptions advocating the monitoring of the educative process within such institutions and those pled by the sectors that propose monitoring of quality by means of external assessments. Both in the former and in the latter example, we wonder if it is a deficiency in the formulation (ingenuity) or cunning, as we remind the contribution by Paulo Freire (1988) when he categorizes educators as tricky, naïf or critical. In both cases, the answer is not good as it would be a tragedy to think that, after over 50 years of graduate programs in operation, the policy makers still do not know the political conceptions that mark the educational debates or then, if they are aware of them, they act cunningly to make them void and reduce political differences and antagonisms to uncertainties and *traditional* guessing. Taking a look at the text, it reads:

One perceives at once the need to conduct studies to dispel these uncertainties and define the contents and procedures that

are to be developed by the elementary and secondary schools in order to offer the long dreamed quality education. This guidance should be taken based on real data and go beyond the traditional “guessing” and prejudices shown by small groups. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 173).

Concerning management, the key tone of the text is prescriptive, with orientations about the organization of the political-pedagogical project, the attention managers are to pay for the good functioning of a school and the role played by the educational systems in supporting the institutions. It does not outline, therefore, focuses of studies to be carried out by the graduate programs.

In regard of the cooperation regimen, the last of the six topics of study to be undertaken by the graduate programs, the key tone is to recover the idea of coordinated actions between the different levels of government in the federation. The text follows the prescriptive direction taken in the previous topic and forebodes, in an incomplete way, that:

All these suggestions seem obvious, but in practice they hardly happen. This implies that, in order to achieve such goal, it is urgent to make changes towards the enrichment of citizenship. If this is to happen we need to push forward discussions and debates with the several actors involved in the educational process. Organizing this debate is a role that can be played by the National Graduate System. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 177).

In the conclusions and recommendations concerning basic education, it is advocated that the studies in the area have had results that are of little visibility and still below what is expected. It should be noted that, in contrast to the positive evaluation of the graduate system, announced in principle, an understanding of the great gaps in the systems is building up, but especially in the education area:

In spite of the fact that many graduate courses have done efforts to study issues connected with basic education, one can see that the results thereof are still scarcely visible, either due to the magnitude of the problem or because such studies avoid certain issues directly associated with the classroom.

The results achieved by basic education are still below what is expected. Consequently, this is a moment for the National Graduate System to adopt this topic as strategic and study it in an integral manner, involving all areas of knowledge. (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 177).

The emphasis to investigate matters that are directly connected with the classroom is not recent and is often associated with the search for conveying the contents analyzed in the undergraduate courses to reality. When this happens within the education area, by itself, deserves to be observed with care as, generally, it already translates the assimilation of minimalist conceptions which reduce education and training to a know-how. The situation is worsened which such concern appears as an assumption of the graduate studies policy within a framework that makes official a political approach. Even more serious, when different areas of knowledge are affected on behalf of *multi-interdisciplinarity*, without major concerns about the mediations related to the characteristics of each area and its specificities.

Judging by the indications already presented so far and by the scope of the analyses undertaken in volume 2 of the plan, the engagement of other areas in this journey has been happening in tune with a multi and interdisciplinary perspective. As a result, the plan agenda for education goes from the unawareness of the production in the area to the legitimacy of interventions sensed from outside inwards and from top to bottom, if we are not to forget the hierarchical relationships that have been established between the areas of

knowledge since Capes. As one can realize, we are not just facing good intentions, as the major point is political: training for the labor market, that is, human resources for the new stage of the national development. Something that we can also problematize from the standpoint of the area, translated into debates as well as in productions brought by their representatives. It is the case of the productions by Macedo; Sousa (2010), defending the tendencies in Capes guidelines, but also presenting a panorama of the productions in the area based on the results of the three-year assessment 2007-2009; and also the issues proposed by Nozella (2010), confronting the studies of the graduate programs in the periods 1965-1985 and 1985-2008.

These studies, as well as the research findings we have been developing, show the opposite of what is foreboded by PNPG. We realize that the study of the production in the area has brought major contributions for the knowledge of realities and may have excessively prioritized issues directly connected with the classroom, as we will attempt to demonstrate in the following section. Therefore, unlike those who are questioning the production in the education area and its relationship with the educational problems, we have seen that the core points involving the area are concerned less with the existence of the production rather than the political orientations that give them shape. A challenge here seems to be an overt relation between inducing policies and the undermining pillars as in the case of the focus on innovation, which often has subverted the social function of the school and of education strictly to comply with the interests of the market. This was expressed by the way PNPG sidestepped to the tensions arising from the production in the area and its emphasis on resolving educational problems through the engagement to the innovation paradigm. Our perspective, therefore, does not include armoring the graduate system, nor despise or minimize the problems affecting basic education, but we turn to the way PNPG evaluates the Brazilian educational reality and

reduces historical problems to strategies of isolated interventions ideologically oriented by technicist interpretations.

### **The production in educational policies and the contributions to basic education**

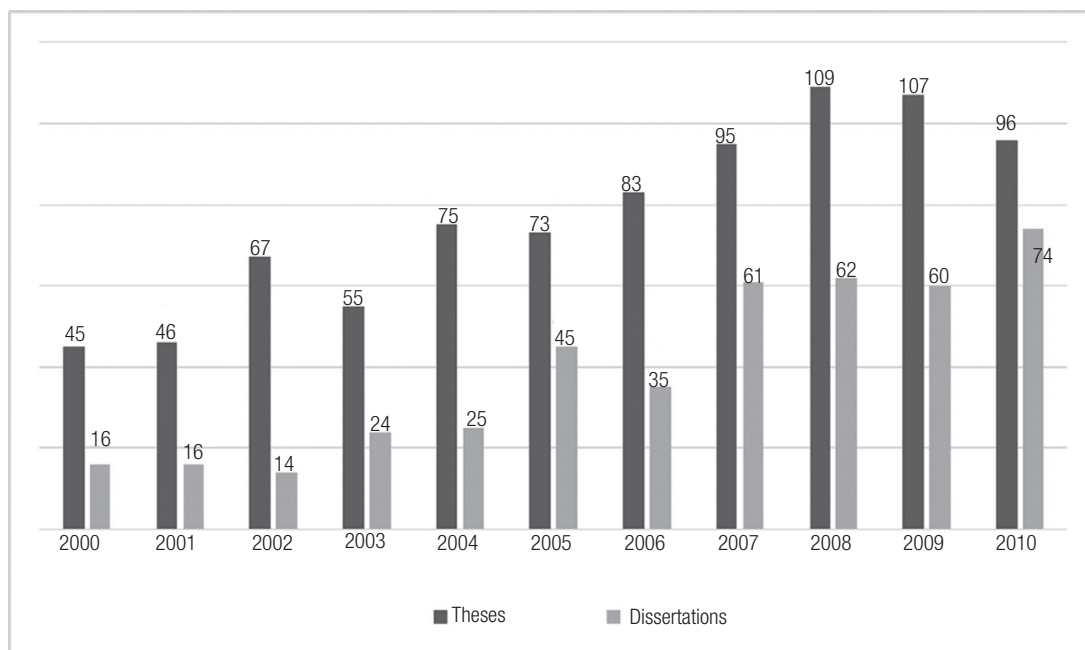
Data presented as follows was generated through a survey of the Capes' bank of theses and dissertations, whose general criterion was the year and the universities with an education graduate program with a grade equal to or higher than five in the period 2000-2010, namely: PUC-RJ, PUC-RS, PUC-SP, UERJ, UFES, UFF, UFG, UFMG, UFPEL, UFPR, UFRJ, UFRGS, UFRN, Ufscar, UFU, Unesp-MAR, Unicamp, Unimep, Unisinos, USP. PUC-SP, although it met the criterion above, had no production related to the field of educational policies along the period.

Before presenting the data we collected, it must be informed that according to the figures made available in Capes portal for 2013, the great area of Human Science totaled 517 graduate programs and courses up to that year; out of the total, 144 were members of the subarea of education. With the purpose of clarifying the characteristics of that production, we present here some pieces of information which reveal tendencies of the research on education, especially on educational policies in the last decade. Initially, it should be mentioned that several authors have emphasized that the studies of public policies, including educational policies, are relatively recent, especially considering the constitution of an area of studies, as report Azevedo (1997), Melo (1999), Souza (2003e 2006), Tello and Almeida (2013), Tello and Mainardes (2014). Despite this understanding the ongoing production in educational policies has remarkably increased, particularly in the 2000s. That is what can be drawn from Charter 1, which translates the production educational policies just by the graduate programs with a grade equal to or higher than 5. One realizes

from this charter that the number of theses and dissertations defended by year was rising along almost the entire period, with discreet exceptions when compared on a per year basis. Comparing

just the first year and the final year there is an apparent incremente in the number of works defended, which total 61 in the year 2000 and 170 in 2010.

**Charter 1** – Total number of dissertations and theses from the selected graduate programs between 2000 and 2010



Source: research data

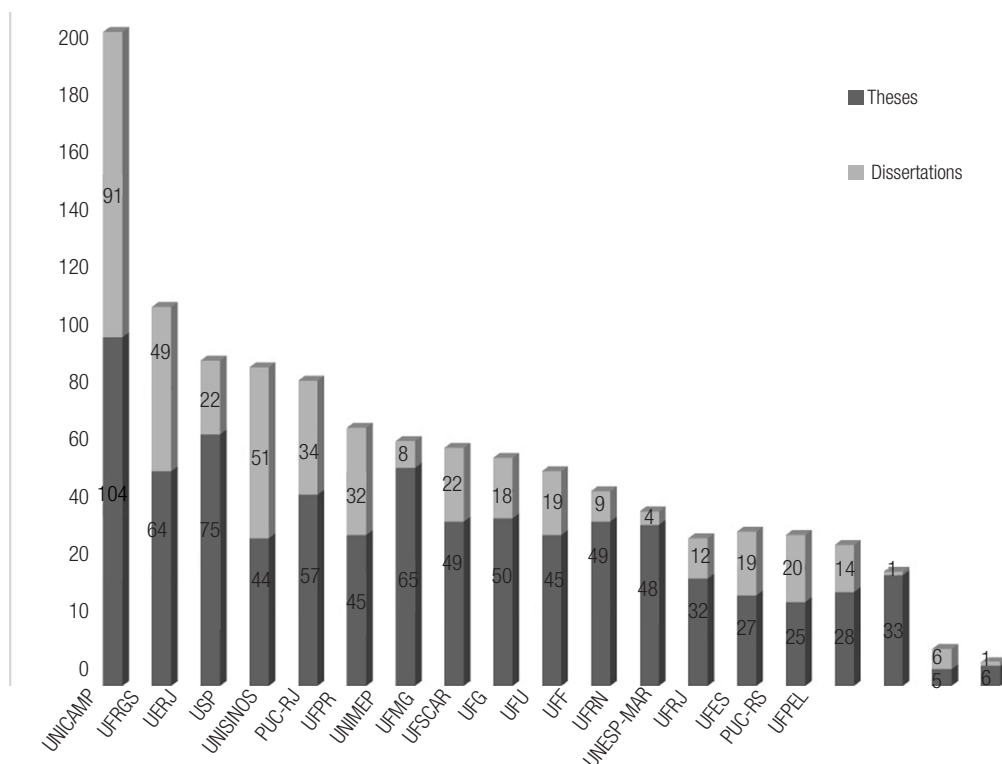
In an universe of 1,283<sup>4</sup> works listed by the study, 34 percent (432) are dissertations and 66 percent (851) are theses. Although along the whole decade one observes a higher number of theses, there was proportionally a greater growth in the number of dissertations, if we look at the two ends of the period. Considering such references, in 2000 the dissertations corresponded to 26.2 percent of the total production, while in 2010 they represented 43.5

percent. As for the theses, which were 73.8 percent of the total production in 2000, the dropped their share to 56.5 percent

When we take a look at the distribution of works among the higher-education institutions, we find that in four long-existing graduate programs which had the highest grades in the last three-year assessment by Capes (Unicamp, UFRGS, USP e PUC-RJ), there is a great balance between the number of theses and dissertations defended along the decade, something that has not happened in the other programs, as shown in Charter 2. This fact, however, should be viewed taking into account that some of these programs had not yet implemented there PhD courses in the beginning of that decade. It is the case of UFES graduate program, whose doctoral studies were implemented in 2004.

**4-** In disclosing the partial results of the research in scientific event annals, as well as in the paper "Pesquisa em política educacional no Brasil (2000-2010): uma análise de teses e dissertações" (research in educational policy in Brazil, 2000-2010: an analysis of dissertations and theses), published by the journal *Práxis Educativa*, Ponta Grossa, v. 9, n. 2, p. 369-393, jul./dec. 2014, it was informed that the total works collected by the study were 1,305. However, during the final revision, it was observed that 22 works included in the list had not be defended in education graduate programs, therefore, they did not meet the research criteria. This finding led the team to correct the data by withdrawing those productions.

**Charter 2** – Number of dissertations and theses by higher-education institutions between 2000 and 2010



Source: research data

The works gathered in this study were firstly identified by central themes, according to the following description:

**Theme 1** – Organization of education, education planning, education administration, education management;

**Theme 2** – Large-scale assessment and institutional assessment;

**Theme 3** – Quality of education quality, quality of teaching;

**Theme 4** – Educational reforms, neoliberalism in education, third sector and social organizations in education, State and educational reforms, analysis and assessment of educational policies;

**Theme 5** – Teacher education policies, teaching career;

**Theme 6** – Education funding, social control of education funds;

**Theme 7** – Theoretical/methodological approaches in research on educational policies;

**Theme 8** – Analysis and assessment of programs and projects from the educational field;

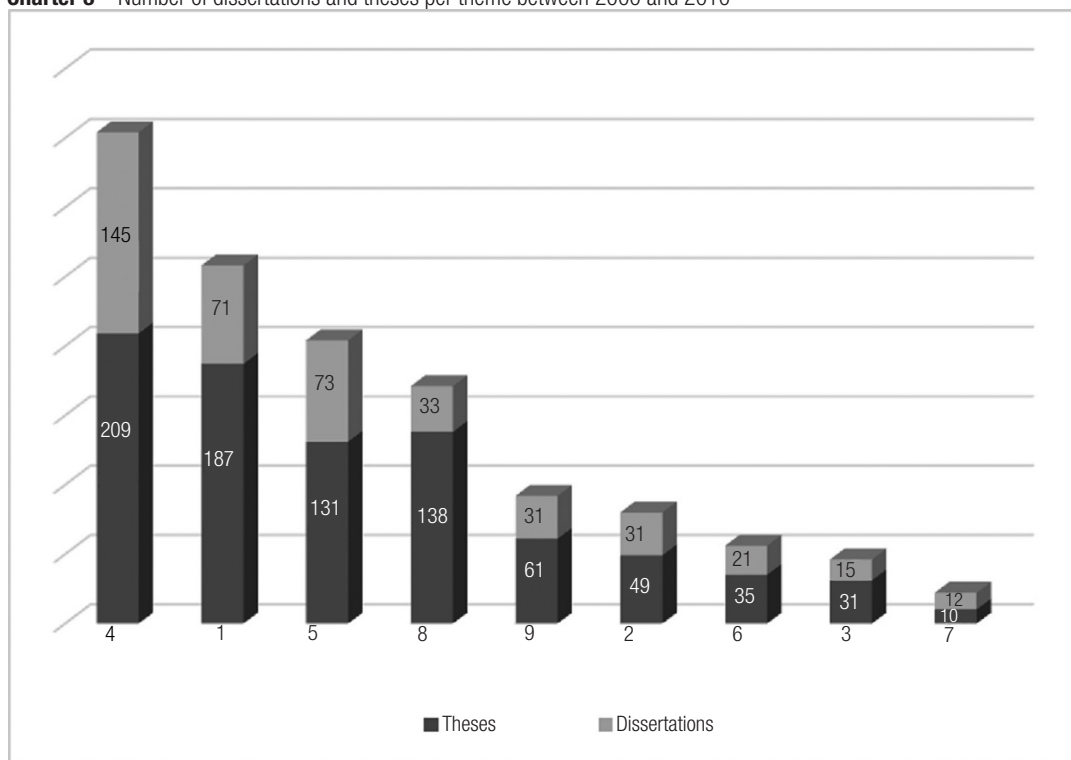
**Theme 9** – Inclusive policies.

Looking at the themes above, one can realize that the area has been dealing with a variety of subjects, many of which dedicated to issues involving basic education. Four out of the nine themes included more than a half of the total productions listed. Theme 4, with the greatest number (354), encompassed dissertations and theses dealing with educational reforms, neoliberalism in education, the third sector and the social organizations in education, as well as the analyses and assessments of educational policies. The range of topics included in this theme has an explanation why it has concentrated the highest amount of works.

The other three were: them 1, including works on educational organization, planning, and management, with 258 dissertations and theses; theme 5 covering the works on teacher education policies and teaching career, with 204, and

theme 8 with works on analysis and assessment of programs and projects in the educational field with 171 dissertations and theses. Charter 3 shows the distribution of works on a per theme basis and the respective degree.

**Charter 3** – Number of dissertations and theses per theme between 2000 and 2010



Source: research data

Legend: Theme 1 - Organization of education, education planning, education administration, education management; Theme 2 - Large-scale assessment and institutional assessment; Theme 3 - Quality of education quality, quality of teaching; Theme 4 - Educational reforms, neoliberalism in education, third sector and social organizations in education, State and educational reforms, analysis and assessment of educational policies; Theme 5 - Teacher education policies, teaching career; Theme 6 - Education funding, social control of education funds; Theme 7 - Theoretical/methodological approaches in research on educational policies; Theme 8 - Analysis and assessment of programs and projects from the educational field; Theme 9 - Inclusive policies.

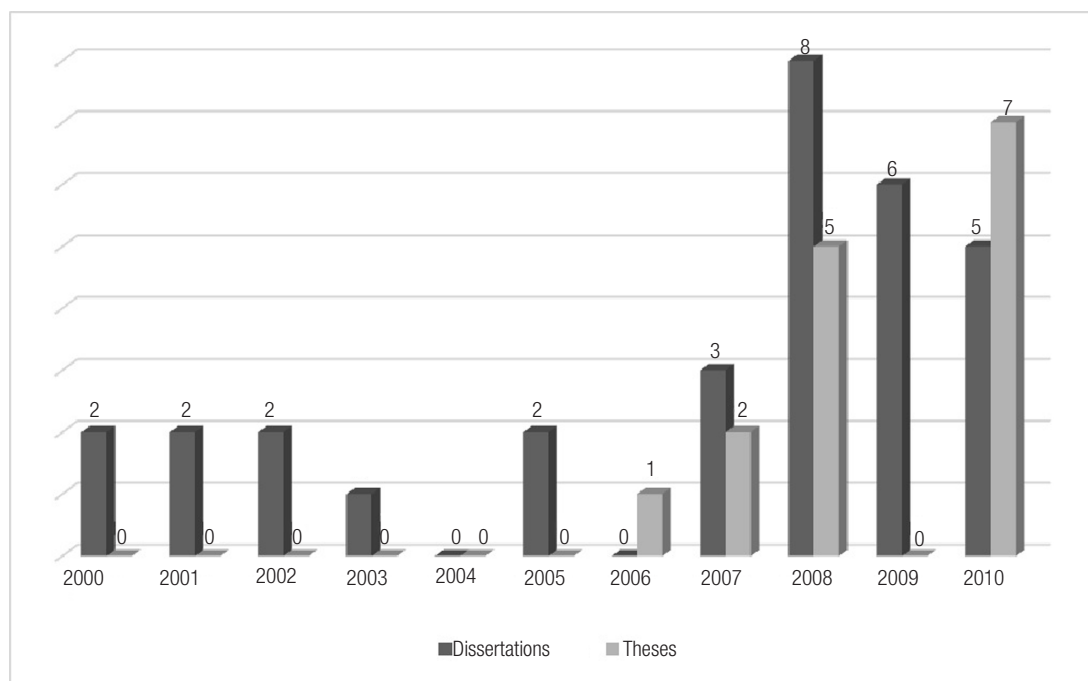
These productions include several works dedicated to the problems of the educational reality, covering issues which, in PNPG 2011-2020, are marked as though they announced some kind of ground zero, especially in relation to the studies *directly connected with the classroom*. In our research, however, we found a number of investigations with such approach, particularly the studies in theme 5 (Teacher education policy), many of which intended to investigate the relationship between teacher

training and its effects in the school. It is the case of the dissertations by Camargo (2004), Carlos (2010), Fontanive (2009), Souto (2008), and Borda (2002). In the latter, the author stresses the importance of initial teacher training but warns of its limits regarding factors such as the diversity of institutions, the teaching-curricular organization of the teaching degrees and also the elements that permeate professional life as the cultural and socioeconomic performance indicators of beginning teachers.

Another aspect highlighted in PNPG 2011-2020 concerns the minimum quality standard of teaching, as set forth by art. 206 of the 1988 Federal Constitution. In regard of theme 3 of the study, covering works about the quality of education and teaching, 46 productions were

selected, and 31 were theses (67 percent) and 15 were dissertations (33 percent). As can be seen in Charter 4, the focus of this theme has been growing in the last few years, but in relation to others, the number of works is still small, which indicates the theme deserves more attention.

**Charter 4** – Theme 3 – Quality – number of dissertations and these between 2000 and 2010



Source: research data

When considering the specific themes of the works classified in this group, we also found in it a diversity of interests of investigation, covering the social quality of education, the public sense of education quality, as in the studies by Silva (2008); Gusmão (2010); Flach (2005), and Vieira (2008); highlights are also the works dedicated to the study of intraschool factors that affect academic performance, impacts of the pedagogical project in the quality of teaching, as for example in the studies by Mesquita (2009) and Fenner (2009), as well as those dealing with indicators of teaching quality, Oliveira (2010) and Dittrich (2010).

From our side, reflecting upon the quality of basic education demands, among others, two

issues that have to be considered as a condition to think what quality teaching is in a school intended for all. One issue is about break the idea of a quality of school that was just a few (DUBET, 2008); the other issue, that matches the first one, is about adopting a historically and socially constructed concept of quality (CARREIRA; PINTO, 2007), which requires to reflect upon a quality school based on the assumption that basic education is social right for all, a right protected by the Constitution.

Brining up such data does not mean, *a priori*, to advocate for or to refuse the merit of productions but allow us to demonstrate the presence of and the interest in studies within this area in different and wide fronts involving



basic education. Looking at these productions when there is an effort to think over the reality of education seems to us necessary before concluding that the results from research in this area are still below what is expected. Moreover, in this context we must reflect upon the very issue of the visibility of the production, but this is something to be dealt with in other papers, which we cannot do in this article.

## Closing remarks

Looking back the graduate plans since their first edition allows us to see hints that, in our view, try to balance continuity (harmonization) and change by maintaining the guidelines for teacher education but absorbing and inducing new fronts such as research, assessment and review of the system in its conception. More than that, it also allows to find complex fabrics of the political game at stake. It is no coincidence that, among the defenses and projections of a scenario that strengths a mercantile view of science, the debate about the choices to be made cannot be avoided:

The community, then, will be responsible with all of us to decide what we want, at the end of the days, for the Humboldt-type and non-Humboldt-type universities: increase the fracture of the old *éthos* of science and of the intellectual, the CUDOS? Resist the Taylorist authority of the boss and the enterprising scientist, the PLACE? Go back to what it was or shape something different, and event different from the former two? (BRASIL, 2010a, p. 130)

We turn back to Freire (1983) to say that we are rooted beings and, as such, we articulate change and permanence according to their meanings. Therefore, problematizing the directions that are being cast around the relationship graduate studies-basic education is part of the trade of those who start to move and are aware that they are political agents guided

by *ethos* in conflict when one has to look at what we know and have and at what changes we want.

Within this framework, research on the academic production of the graduate programs in education turns out to be strategic for the studies in the area of educational policies, as well as for its agenda and allows to question the diagnostics of the scarce accumulation of knowledge in education, whereas it indicates changes in the characteristics of the production. There is clear evidence, as indicated by the data presented here, that much of what has been produced is intended to comprehend the Brazilian educational reality, where basic schooling is the primary focus. Divergences in orientation or the assumption of a market perspective may even not be included in it, but this is not grounds for PNPG 2011-2020 to prevaricate about the production in the area, nor to reduce it to *traditional guessing*, as we have demonstrated above. This does not certainly mean to spare the area from its responsibilities in the face of the great challenging debates, including in the perspective of setting agendas of research dealing with issues involving basic education. It is an illusion to assume, however, that only basic education has problems to tackle and higher education is far from trouble, or to assign the graduate programs with the task of resolving such problems.

In addition, an aspect must also be touched that may go unnoticed in this debate in regard of the initial expectancies of the education professionals themselves about the relationship between the training provided by the teaching degrees and the educational reality, which often reinforces linear understandings between training and its practical use. We are talking about the interpellations about the articulation between what one studies in a teaching degree and the reality of basic education, as if we were looking for applications in the higher-education courses that would empower us automatically for an efficient practice. These de-contextualized notions have

formed a powerful apparatus (also ideologically) destined to training more and more centered around knowledge and far away from the conceptual mastery. Sharing the reflections by Kuenzer and Moraes (2009), we would say that, in these analyses:

the theoretical effort is associated with waste of time or metaphysical speculation or, at most, it is restricted to develop speaking skills, a persuasive and fragmentary scheme tied to its own discursive structure. In other words, it is a disposition that flattens the world by reducing what is knowable to the sensitive experience, to the manipulation of what is topical and immediate. Under these circumstances, educational research is hampered in its capacity to apprehend the functional relations between empirical

phenomena. Such disposition demeans the studies conducted in the area [...]. (KUENZER; MORAES, 2009, p. 194).

In this context, the prevalence of formulations intended to provide education and training to the staff of the productive sectors or non-academic markets, as defined by Fischer (2010), as well as the compressions on the problems of basic education, presented with apathy in regard of the education area makes us fearful of the paths PNPG 2011-2020 may take. Dismissing the area by identifying its products as *traditional guessing* and its political differences as *uncertainties* is, to say the least, a statement of indifference towards its production, but reveals in addition hostility and conceit, disguised as multi-interdisciplinarity.

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**Antonia Almeida Silva** is PhD in Education by the University of São Paulo, full professor in the Education Department at the Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana; works in the area of educational policies in the academic master's program in education, as well as in the teaching degrees.

**Márcia Aparecida Jacomini** is PhD in Education by the University of São Paulo, professor in the Education Department at the Universidade Federal de São Paulo; works in the areas of educational policies and school management in undergraduate and graduate courses.