



Educational disparities in arts education: from official regulations to the practice of education in regular public schools.

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Abstract

The project aimed at analyzing educational disparities in the teaching of arts to elementary 2 level students of state public schools. Based on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of educational disparities, the main prescriptive documents designed to guide teaching practices, and current researches in this area have been reviewed. The field research targeted two municipal schools of Campinas that belong to the Campinas East Board of Education, and opposed to one another in terms of INSE and IDESP grade.

Key words:

Educational disparities, arts education, elementary school.

Introduction

The research aimed at analyzing educational disparities in the teaching of arts in the second segment of elementary education in public schools. The work of P. Bourdieu provided theoretical elements for this study. According to this author, the central mechanism of the conversion of social disparities—mainly defined based on the proximity of families to legitimate culture—into school disparities is carried out when the school acknowledges the value of legitimate culture and the legitimate relation to culture as transmitted by non-school means within family practices.

Two public schools of Campinas were surveyed, one with students with higher socioeconomic status and higher performance levels in standardized Portuguese tests, and one with students with lower socioeconomic status and lower performance levels in the same tests. The following prescriptive documents were also reviewed: National Curricular Standards, the Curriculum of São Paulo State, and Teacher and Student Books of São Paulo State.

Results and Discussion

As expected, the survey confirmed that, for the school located closer to downtown Campinas, with lower INSE and higher IDESP score, students and teacher used practices that were more similar to those provided for in the regulations. On the other hand, for the school located on the outskirts of Campinas, with higher INSE and lower IDESP scores, students and teacher used practices that were more apart from those set out in the prescriptive documents.

Based on the comparison between the theoretical survey and the practices and realities found in Campinas schools, we were able to identify four general mechanisms that promote disparities in arts education, which we believe that exist beyond these two schools: I) conflicts between the requirements and the actual training of teachers, II) conflicts between students as designed in the prescriptions and actual students and their relation to the teaching of arts, III) conflicts between the prescriptive and traditional approaches to arts education, IV) conflicts between materials and facilities as required by the prescriptions and those actually available in schools.

Conclusions

The goals of arts education as prescribed in official documents require extraordinary conditions to be accomplished, teachers who can work all four languages in all three planned dimensions, students that can build a relationship with art for its intrinsic value, schools that deviate from the traditional approach to arts teaching and have the facilities and materials required to do so. These conditions are very hard to find in the state public schools. Therefore, the more a school satisfies the necessary conditions to adhere to the prescriptions, the more it tends to succeed in meeting such prescriptions.

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