

Presentation: Reflexivity and denunciation: Pierre Bourdieu and research in education, two decades on

Apresentação: Reflexividade e denúncia: Pierre Bourdieu e a pesquisa em educação, passadas duas décadas

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ABSTRACT

In 2022 we remember the 20th anniversary of the death of Pierre Bourdieu, an important sociologist who, over the decades, developed an extensive work that covered various themes and defined important concepts for the development of his research, such as the notions of habitus, field, and capital. The interweaving of these notions allowed the weaving of quite original analyses. Specifically on education, his writings, which mark his reflexivity and his spirit of denunciation, allow us to better understand the relations between social, cultural, and school inequalities. In this issue, we present ten articles from different regions of the country, covering quantitative and qualitative research and a rich thematic diversity. They are researches that mobilized the author's modus operandi, demonstrating that Pierre Bourdieu continues to be an unavoidable reference for research in education.

Keywords: Pierre Bourdieu. Research in Education. Educational Processes.

RESUMO

Em 2022 lembramos os 20 anos de morte de Pierre Bourdieu, um importante sociólogo que, ao longo de décadas, desenvolveu extensa obra passando por temas variados e definindo conceitos importantes para o desenvolvimento de suas pesquisas, tais como as noções de *habitus*, campo e capitais. O entrelaçamento dessas noções permitiu a tessitura de análises bastante originais.

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Especificamente sobre educação, seus escritos, que marcam sua reflexividade e seu espírito de denúncia, permitem compreender melhor as relações entre desigualdades sociais, culturais e escolares. Apresentamos, neste dossiê, dez artigos de diferentes regiões do país, abrangendo pesquisas quantitativas e qualitativas e rica diversidade temática. São pesquisas que mobilizaram o *modus operandi* do autor, demonstrando que Pierre Bourdieu continua sendo uma referência incontornável para pesquisas em educação.

Palavras-chave: Pierre Bourdieu. Pesquisas em Educação. Processos Educativos.

Introduction

Dedicating a dossier to the publication of studies with the work of a thinker as their epistemological orientation indicates not only the perception of their contribution, but also the pertinence, intensity, and penetration of their reflections. Only spirits critically inscribed in their historical time, exceptionally creative, sensitive, stimulating, with ideas in permanent effervescence, spirits that overflow with projects, controversial spirits that stir controversy, benefit from this recognition.

This was the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), as testified by some of those who had the opportunity to gravitate around him at specific moments in their academic careers. His notoriety and longevity can be observed in the intense circulation of his thought in France and abroad. Considered as a classic of Western sociology of the second half of the twentieth century¹ he becomes, therefore, an inescapable reference to contemporary sociological research. His scientific production continues to guide multiple intellectual domains, due to the breadth of his theories and concepts, the timeliness of his multi-thematic analyses, the polemical conceptions on social domination and reproduction, thanks finally to the power of his reflexivity². For Joly (2018, p. 72), “few have been as eager as he to grasp the ‘plurality of worlds’ and the ‘plurality of logics corresponding to different worlds’.”

Penetrating behind the scenes of a world legitimized by arbitrariness of different orders, also present in the university and scientific fields, could not happen without provoking reactions. Pierre Bourdieu knew well the ins and outs of this field, which was his professional world; he knew that in it persuasive and concealed practices of symbolic power predominate. As it could not be otherwise, his ideas, seen by many as

¹ Pierre Bourdieu’s work can no longer be seen as a purely academic product, he has reached fractions of the educated public, well beyond the usual reader of works in the social sciences. We can cite as examples of this repercussion the following works: Bourdieu (1993); Bourdieu (1996); Bourdieu (1998); Bourdieu (2001a).

² On the incorporation of the notion of reflexivity in Bourdieu’s writings and the meaning attributed to it, see mainly: Mauger (2017, pp. 305-308) and Gingras (2020, pp. 718-720).

heretical, subjected him to the same logics he had grasped when analyzing the French scientific and intellectual field, and when highlighting the choices, not always scientific, of homo academicus (BOURDIEU, 1984 ;2011).

The quarrels in the world of ideas and science led him to realize that it is the positions occupied in each field, supported by the dispositions proper to the field, which determine the positions taken, especially in the “critical moments”. That is, his theory was and has been the object of that which he so thoroughly unveiled: the scientific field is, like the others, a microcosm of struggles; and predicted:³ “by advocating the practice of reflexivity, I am aware of offering to others instruments that they can apply to subject me to objectification, - but by doing so, they make me right”. (BOURDIEU, 2001b, p. 221)

His reflexivity maintains all its vitality even twenty years after his death⁴. It is a reflexivity built from his experience in Algeria in the context of the War of Independence (1954-1962), through the analysis of the everyday practices of Bearnese peasants⁵, to the formulation of a sociology of the school system and the production of a sociology of social fields. It is a reflexivity that seeks foundations and inspiration in distinct theoretical approaches, considered at the time as irreconcilable, establishing privileged dialogues with some of them.

Crossing epistemological frontiers was one of the first challenges taken on by the young graduate of the prestigious Ecole Normale Supérieure, in partnership with Jean-Claude Chamboredon and Jean-Claude Passeron, as confirmed by his *Le métier de sociologue*, published in 1968 [1999]. Since then, he has endeavored to delineate reasoned syntheses, assuring himself of the necessary “epistemological vigilance” in

³ To illustrate these quarrels, we highlight a recently published work entitled “Pierre Bourdieu. Un structuralisme héroïque” (2016), by Jean-Louis Fabiani, his former disciple. In this work, the author purports to be a strong detractor of Bourdieusian theory, aiming to transpose it and not just underlining its limits. The reaction to Fabiani’s arguments were immediately contested. A task taken up notably by Marc Joly through the work “Pour Bourdieu,” published in 2018, which examines the lack of rigor and grounding (even ethical) in the work of the most recent detractor of Bourdieusian theory.

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu continues to speak to all of us and to all those who want to read critically the social world, including the school world. Besides the increasingly intense circulation of his works in different countries thanks to translations into several languages, his thought has remained as a novelty on the shelves of bookstores and libraries, especially in the Western world. We highlight the most recent publications from courses taught at the Collège de France between 1982 and 2001, when he held a chair in sociology, namely: Bourdieu (2012), Bourdieu (2013), Bourdieu (2015), Bourdieu (2017), Bourdieu (2022b); a posthumous title that has just been published: Bourdieu (2022c); an international dictionary, organized by Gisèle Sapiro (2020); as well as a supplemented and updated work (2022a). Some of these are already available in Portuguese.

⁵ Bearne is a French department located in the Atlantic Pyrenees, where Pierre Bourdieu comes from.

order to transcend the authorized oppositions between Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Max Weber (1864-1920), and to build theoretical and methodological bases for his reading of the social world.

The critical force of his reflexivity calls from the beginning for an ethics of responsibility, built from the confirmation of one of his hypotheses: there is homology between the social space and the political space, being arbitrated by the educational system, which promotes a true “social alchemy”. Thus, to avoid the risk of replacing one doxa by another or, even worse, one orthodoxy by another, Pierre Bourdieu understands that there is no science without engagement, nor engagement without science: “social science, whether it ages or not, is a political science.” (BOURDIEU, 2016, p. 149) The responsibility of sociology consists, therefore, in transmitting the ‘weapons of critique’, but also in producing critical knowledge about these same weapons, in order to apprehend at the same time reality as it presents itself in different contexts and produce a sociology of sociology. Now, this supposes proposing a theoretical contribution in permanent movement or, in other words, a sociology as a starting point, never as an end.

It is this reflexivity that ensures Pierre Bourdieu a central place in the sociology of education, historically occupied in the Francophone space by Émile Durkheim. As his analyses of educational systems advance showing the place of the republican School and University in social reproduction, it becomes evident the need to dedicate a greater and more rigorous interest to education, laying bare the legitimate symbolic violence operated by them. For this reason, it seems fundamental to support a sociology of denunciation, since “the social sciences are made against the social world, in rupture with the social world” (BOURDIEU, 2013, p. 20), hence the importance of articulating political engagement and mobilization, which is only possible by thinking relationally, freeing oneself from the determinisms inscribed in different social, institutional, and professional spaces.

Four works, as already pointed out elsewhere⁶, support the observation that the sociologist’s interest in education and in education systems runs through his analytical trajectory, given the importance attributed to these institutions in contemporary societies: *The heirs: students and culture [Les héritiers: les étudiants et la culture]*, published in France in 1964 and in Brazil in 2014; *Reproduction: elements for a theory of the education system [La reproduction. Eléments pour une théorie du système d’enseignement]*, published in France in 1970 and in Brazil in 1975, both arising from the partnership between Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron; *Homo academicus*, published in France in 1984 and in Brazil in 2011; and *La noblesse d’État; grandes écoles et esprit de corps*, published in France in 1989, these two exclusively authored by Pierre Bourdieu. The reading and study of these works do not dispense, however,

⁶ See especially Valle (2020, p. 98-116).

the detailed examination of the others since the object “education system” crosses as a kind of transversal theme throughout Bourdieusian reflection.

Our expectation - which can be apprehended as a challenge - with regard to this dossier was not simply limited to a return on the posthumous ideas and concepts of an author of great intellectual weight to contemporary research. What we proposed was a critical dialogue with his ideas and concepts, as well as the mobilization of his *modus operandi*, aiming at an insightful and pertinent access to his referential. One of our concerns in proposing this dossier was the fact that a widely quoted author is not necessarily read and understood, and that it is not enough to have a scholarly knowledge of him. In short, it is not enough to have in the library - or on the bedside table - everything by Bourdieu and everything about Bourdieu.

In this perspective, we proposed the establishment of a dialogue with his gigantic sociological edifice, particularly covering the field of education, because we recognize that his theory of social (and pedagogical) practices has become essential to those who wish to critically read educational realities, even if they are distant and distinct from the one on which the construction of his interpretative lenses was based.

We assume that his radical critique of ‘French-style meritocracy’, which offers an enchanted vision of the educational system⁷, cannot be transposed entirely, or without difficulty, to other national contexts (historical, geographical, political, cultural). This is the reason why we have defined as a goal to receive and appreciate manuscripts related to unpublished research in education that bring Pierre Bourdieu’s thought, built from real collective adventures, as an analytical tool, using his relational form of analysis, mainly due to the articulation between the concepts of habitus, field and capital.

Therefore, we aim to highlight the actuality of its legacy, particularly in the Brazilian investigative context, either through the classical use of its concepts or through works that discuss the re-signification of some of its notions having as reference the analysis of local and contemporary processes of social reproduction in its relationship with school processes. In this sense, the proposed researches could resort only to Bourdieu or establish dialogues with other authors. A wide field of possibilities was, therefore, opened for studies dedicated to scrutinizing school inequalities in Basic and Higher Education, to understand teacher education and professional socialization, school practices and curricular issues, among other themes.

It was possible, in the face of a wide and diverse range of themes, covering levels of schooling and areas of knowledge, to contemplate works that situate the appropriation of the work of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in Brazil and that put into dialogue his concepts and distinct educational realities. Camila Ferreira da Silva and Amurabi

⁷ According to Bourdieu (2015, p. 377), “the education system has a very particular function in our societies: it is the great institution of symbolic duplication of sanctions through which experience is engendered in the sense of unconscious adherence to objective needs.”

Oliveira, through the text entitled “*Bourdieu and Brazil: outline of an academic genealogy*”, highlight the role of some Brazilian researchers who established a direct or indirect contact with the French sociologist, between the 1960s and 1990s, and who contributed to the dissemination of the author in the Brazilian academic field. With a diversified database (information from the Lattes and Acácia platforms, interviews and reports published by the Research and Documentation Center of Contemporary History of Brazil (CPDOC), the authors point to the importance of these actors in the dissemination of Bourdieu on Brazilian soil, through translations of his work, but especially through the organization of collections, publication of articles, research guidelines, courses, etc., as they took on the task of continuing the debate from the Bourdieusian perspective.

Cristina Carta Cardoso de Medeiros, through her text entitled “*Mobilization of the legacy of Pierre Bourdieu 20 years later: the timeliness of a debate for Education*”, proposes to discuss the legacy of the author, 20 years after his death. Initially, it presents some unpublished works by and about the sociologist, which can contribute to the appropriation of his theoretical framework. Next, the author presents the results of a search conducted in databases that contemplate the productions at the graduate level, trying to identify (quantitatively and qualitatively) theses and dissertations that mobilize his thought, besides comparing the same data to another research published 10 years ago. Medeiros concludes that Bourdieu continues to be an important reference and that his most used concepts in educational research are habitus, field, capital, and social trajectory.

The article entitled “*(Re)reading Bourdieu from the work of Maria Helena Souza Patto*”, by Lygia de Sousa Viegas, Jackson Barbosa da Costa and Adriana Marcondes Machado, brings to debate concepts elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu present in the work of Maria Helena Souza Patto, a reference professor in the field of Educational Psychology in Brazil. The authors point out that Maria Helena Souza Patto has built a critical dialogue with Bourdieu, based on a careful study of the Brazilian reality, identifying reproductions, but also ruptures and creations in the school routine.

Daniela Maria Ferreira, Graziela Serroni Perosa and Frédéric Lebaron, in the article “*The space of educational inequalities in São Paulo and Recife*”, point out that the notion of social space integrates several other concepts of Pierre Bourdieu. Based on educational indicators, household income, data on public infrastructure, sociodemographic data, death and homicide rates, employment rates, among others, the authors conclude that there is a relationship between longevity, income and level of education, as well as between high school completion in places with greater infrastructure, a phenomenon that in Recife is more localized in some neighborhoods of the city, while in São Paulo, there is a greater number of intermediate social positions.

The objective of Maria da Graça Jacintho Setton and Paulo Rogério da C. Neves is to examine “*Trends in the schooling of São Paulo’s elites in the 20th and 21st*

centuries”. Based on questionnaires and interviews with 48 participants of the elites of nine economic sectors, with different ages and time of belonging to the elites also diverse, the authors conclude that from a strong sense of game, the family strategies for social mobilization or maintenance of privileges occurred through the choice of distinctive schools, having the internationalization as a central element in this choice, sometimes seeking education abroad, sometimes bilingual schools, but always choices in tune with the ideal of education of each period.

Bruna Tatianne Moura de Queirós, Tânia de Freitas Resende, and Débora Cristina Piotto also mobilize Bourdieusian concepts to analyze family strategies for school choice. In the article “*Choosing a federal Integrated High School in the Brazilian countryside: Bourdieu’s actuality*”, based on a broad empirical database built through questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups, the authors demonstrated that families with more schooling made more strategic choices for the prestigious school in the city, while in families with less schooling, the choice was more random, often motivated by the children themselves. They defend, therefore, the need for a more extended use of the notion of cultural capital articulated with informational capital.

Cultural capital was also one of the concepts mobilized by Célia Elizabete Caregnato, Bernardo Sfredo Miorando and Julio César Baldasso in the article “*Academic socialization of students in a public research university: variations of the student experience in relation to cultural capital*”. The context analyzed is that of the expansion and diversification of the student population in Brazilian public universities as a result of the recent quota policies and democratization of access. Based on a survey applied in 2021 among undergraduate students at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, the authors establish relationships between academic socialization, high education of parents and trips abroad. However, they indicate that research programs, extension programs, and initiation to teaching also significantly impact academic socialization, especially for students from less favored social backgrounds.

The context of diversification of the student public in public universities is also analyzed by Hellen Cristina Xavier da Silva Mattos and Maria Cristina da Silveira Galan Fernandes, in the article “*Symbolic challenges of the university: the perspective of students on permanence*”. Based on interviews with students from the Federal University of São Carlos, the authors denounce the weight of symbolic violence and a meritocratic ideology inside the university, especially on students from disadvantaged strata who take responsibility for their own failure. However, they point out that the insertion of this new public brings conflicts that may change the classifications and perceptions traditionally present inside the universities.

The relational analysis of the last two articles of this dossier focuses mainly on the concept of field. Cristiano Mezzaroba and Jaison José Bassani in the article “*Field, habitus and illusio - the conceptual triad of Pierre Bourdieu in the exercise of investigating the constitution of an academic subfield (of media and technologies) in*

Brazilian physical education” through interviews with nine researchers who exercised the coordination of the Thematic Work Group Communication and Media of the Brazilian College of Sports Sciences, between 1997 and 2017, the authors trace the strategies of the agents in the consolidation of this subfield, especially through sociability and the search for recognition of a scientific capital of its own, which was possible thanks to the existing disputes in the field of Physical Education between biomedical knowledge on one hand, and the knowledge of humanities and communication on the other.

And to close our dossier, we bring the text by Francisca das Chagas Alves da Silva and Nyuara Araújo da Silva Mesquita, entitled “*The constitution of the subfield of chemistry teacher education and the subversion strategies for its recognition in the scientific field of chemistry*”. With an empirical basis a research based on the scientific production in the area of Chemistry Teaching anchored on data from the Acácia and Sucupira platforms, the authors present the subversion strategies established by the subfield of Teacher Training in Chemistry, from, above all, the organization of its own events and publications in teaching journals, seeking recognition within the Scientific Field of Chemistry.

We hope that the thematic and methodological diversity presented here, as well as the mobilization of discussions considered classics of Bourdieusian thought alongside others that point to the need for expansion of concepts or the establishment of dialogues with different authors, can do justice to the tribute and contribute to the reflexivity and denunciation so necessary in educational research.

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