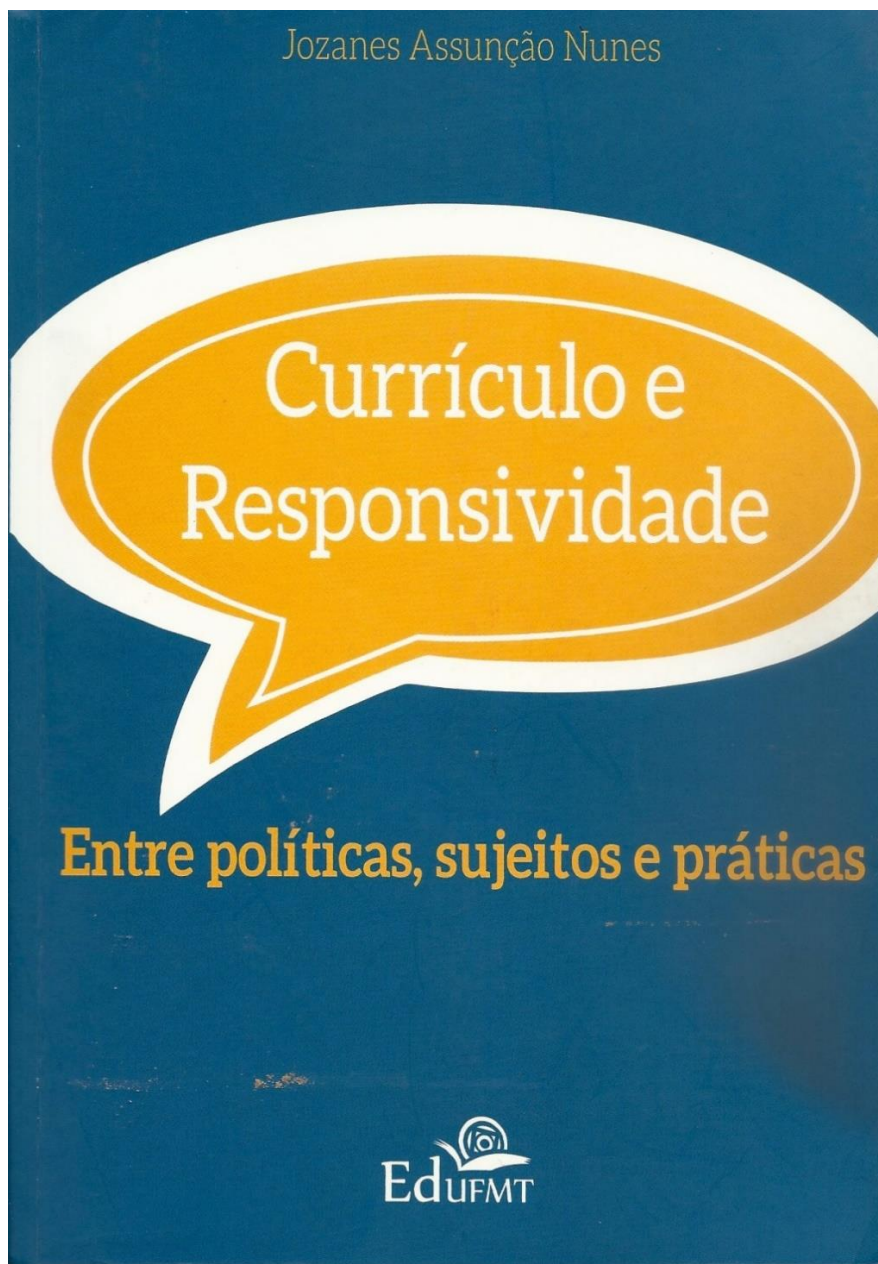


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We know that the question of education in Brazil is one of the most serious issues faced by the country, at every educational level and from any observed angle. Analyses of the problem point to different causes to this historical, social and cultural education lag. Moreover, along the years, and especially since the second half of the 20th century, somewhat efficient public policies have been committed to providing quality in education that fosters responsible citizenship. They have been implemented and legally altered on a continuous basis, and yet the results, albeit existent, still do not correspond to the needs that have been acknowledged for so long.

Among the many educational issues that prompt reflections and in-depth actions that aim at the betterment and improvement of teaching, the ones related to the curriculum of the programs of philosophy colleges are not a novelty. Anísio Teixeira, the indispensable education philosopher, pointed out, in his 1953 work titled *Educação não é privilégio* [*Education is Not a Privilege*], that the curricula were inappropriate to tackle the issue of teacher training:

[...] as philosophy colleges emerged, they were characterized by this academic spirit of specialized culture in several knowledge areas and not by a vocational spirit per se. Thus, they were not able to teach the basic culture to liberal professions, nor the dominantly eclectic and practical culture to new secondary programs. Similarly, they were not capable of training teachers to secondary programs of teacher training – of a vocational nature. Thus, they were reduced to a teacher training of doubtful value whereas teachers of other areas were more academically prepared to teach at those secondary teacher education programs. [...]

As the education departments in these philosophy schools are, despite everything, less academic, they enjoy less prestige. Moreover, there is a strong pressure for the creation of academic departments specialized in teaching pedagogy (TEIXEIRA, 1994, p.129; p.130).¹

¹ In the original: “[...] as Faculdades de Filosofia nasceram marcadas por esse espírito acadêmico de cultura especializada nas diversas disciplinas e não pelo espírito vocacional propriamente dito, as Faculdades de Filosofia não se revelaram capazes de ministrar a cultura básica para as profissões liberais nem a cultura predominantemente eclética e prática para os novos cursos secundários. Igualmente não se revelaram capazes de preparar o professor para os cursos normais, de tipo vocacional, reduzindo-se neste campo à formação em certa especialização pedagógica de validade duvidosa para as disciplinas de pedagogia das escolas normais, recebendo os demais professores da escola normal preparo especializado de tipo acadêmico [...]. Os departamentos de educação, nessas escolas de filosofia, por isto que são, apesar de tudo, menos acadêmicos, são os de menor prestígio, existindo forte pressão para se fazerem também departamentos acadêmicos para ensinar pedagogia.”

Somehow these issues still remain. How has our academy responded to them? Difficult questions require complex answers, such as the ones presented in *Currículo e responsividade: entre políticas, sujeitos e práticas* [*Curriculum and Answerability: Between Policies, Subjects, and Practices*]. The author, Jozanes Assunção Nunes, currently teaches at the Graduate Program in Language Studies of the Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso (UFMT) [Federal University of Mato Grosso]. She is also an educational administrative staff member of the university's Deanship of Undergraduate Education. More specifically, her doctoral research, which resulted in the publication of this book, focuses on issues that she experienced at the university, i.e., “challenging data that were made public in the reports of the *Exame Nacional de Desempenho de Estudantes* (ENADE) [National Exam of Student Performance], revealing that the undergraduate language programs² needed to be altered significantly” (p.13).³ Thus, this work derives from her desire to use science, viz., the dialogical theory of discourse, in order to understand life in general and more specifically the university life of the community of a language program. She seeks to understand the relationship between the official discourse of the State and the discourse of university teachers, the individuals who are responsible for the daily practice in an undergraduate language program. In other words, when teachers discuss the program's curriculum and its necessary revision and modification, she specifically wants to comprehend “how the members of the Núcleo Docente Estruturante (NDE) [Structuring Faculty Board (henceforth SFB)]⁴ of the undergraduate language programs – which are about to be evaluated by the Ministry of Education – respond to the official discourse that refers to curriculum reformation”

² TN. An undergraduate language program in Brazil is usually called a “Letters” program, as it encompasses language and literature studies. Universities may offer individual language programs, such as Portuguese program, English program, Sign language program, etc., or two-language programs, such as Portuguese and English program, Portuguese and Sign language program, etc.

³ In the original: “inquietantes dados divulgados em Relatórios do Exame Nacional de Desempenho de Estudantes (Enade), os quais revelam que os cursos de Letras carecem de significativas alterações.”

⁴ TN. According to Resolution No. 7/2010 of the *Comissão Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior* (Conaes) [National Commission for the Evaluation of Higher Education], the *Núcleo Docente Estruturante* [Structuring Faculty Board] refers to a group of professors, members of the faculty of an undergraduate program, who are responsible for, among other things, the “process of conception, consolidation, and constant updating of the pedagogical project of the program” (http://portal.mec.gov.br/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=6885-resolucao1-2010-conae&category_slug=outubro-2010-pdf&Itemid=30192). In the original: “processo de concepção, consolidação e contínua atualização do projeto pedagógico do curso.”

(NUNES, 2019, p.15).⁵ This is a delicate issue, known by those who have experience in the area and to whom this relationship between discourse that comes “from upper levels” and daily practice is not easy.

The title of the work is broad and invites readers to reflect on a special and very important aspect of education, that is, the curriculum of undergraduate language programs.⁶ The cover elucidates the content of the book: a big yellow speech balloon with the words “Curriculum and Answerability,” dialoguing with the policies, subjects, and practices that will be analyzed, based on Bakhtinian postulates. As to the concept of answerability, we should refer to the Bakhtin’s short text, published in 1919, titled Art and Answerability. In it, the young Russian thinker draws readers’ attention to the possible *mechanical* relationship between different domains of human culture: “The three domains of human culture – science, art, and life – gain unity only in the individual person who integrates them *into his own unity*” (BAKHTIN, 1990, p.1; emphasis added).⁷ For him, if the relationship is mechanical, it becomes external to individuals, and the domains – alien to each other – will not touch each other. It is when individuals answer for their own actions and respond to the action of others that they incorporate these domains into their own unity. I believe this refers to the researcher, scientist, and author of this work. It is this answerability, a responsible answer to crucial educational questions, that emerges from the text.

The Preface, titled Como interagem professores e discursos legais de âmbito educacional [How Teachers and Educational Official Discourses Interact], by Beth Brait, a professor and researcher in discourse studies (PUC-SP; USP; CNPq), is the first element of the book to positively evaluate it. In Contents, we see how the book is structured carefully and in detail: after the Presentation, it is divided into three parts, which encompass eight chapters, and the Final Words.

⁵ In the original: “[C]omo os professores que integram o Núcleo Docente Estruturante (NDE) de Cursos de Letras em processo de avaliação do MEC respondem aos discursos oficiais que tratam da reestruturação curricular.”

⁶ As we know, undergraduate language programs in Brazil are offered either as a Bachelor of Arts program or a Teacher Education program. The type of program influences the organization of the curriculum. At first, the reflections presented by Nunes refer to all the undergraduate language programs of the university where the research was being conducted; however, at the end, she focuses on only one.

⁷ BAKHTIN, M. Art and Answerability. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov; translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990, pp.1-3.

Part I focuses on Postulados bakhtinianos: para firmar uma base teórico-metodológica [Bakhtinian Postulates: To Establish a Theoretical-Methodological Basis]. It explicitly presents the Bakhtinian concepts on which the analysis is based in a very clear and committed manner. In other words, Nunes not only explains the concepts but also firmly incorporates them into her writing as an author. Furthermore, by uttering them to the readers, she mobilizes them in her previous presentation of the research corpus:

Therefore, Statements and Resolutions from the *Comissão Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior* (Conaes) [National Commission for the Evaluation of Higher Education] and the *Conselho Nacional de Educação* (CNE) [National Education Council], as well as utterances from the members of the *Núcleo Docente Estruturante* [Structuring Faculty Board] of the undergraduate language programs are intrinsically associated to the institutional instances in which they were produced. Therefore, they reflect and refract their ideological values and refer to an axiological positioning. A certain evaluative emphasis is placed on these utterances: as the theoretician [Vološinov] explains, words do not exist without evaluative emphasis. (NUNES, 2019, p.27).⁸

Another example is when she discusses discourse genres and the way they differ in different spheres of social activity. She states that:

The genres that are more coercive, such as the Pedagogical Project of the undergraduate Portuguese and Literature Program, require that the discourse operation of words be more stable as opposed to the interviews given by the research participants, for example. Interviews are prone to be penetrated by different voices” (NUNES, 2019, p.28).⁹

⁸ In the original: “Logo, os Pareceres e Resoluções da Comissão Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior (Conaes) e do Conselho Nacional de Educação (CNE), assim como os enunciados dos professores do Núcleo Docente Estruturante dos Cursos de Letras estão inerentemente associados às instâncias institucionais em que foram produzidos e, por isso, refletem e refratam seus valores ideológicos, remetendo a uma posição axiológica. Tais enunciados são acompanhados por uma ênfase valorativa determinada, uma vez que, como explica o teórico [Volóchinov], sem uma ênfase valorativa, não há palavra.”

⁹ In the original: “Os gêneros mais coercitivos, como o Projeto Pedagógico do Curso de Letras Português e Literatura que será analisado, impõem à palavra um funcionamento discursivo mais estável que as entrevistas concedidas pelos sujeitos da pesquisa, por exemplo, mais suscetíveis à impregnação de vozes distintas.”

In the second chapter of Part I, Nunes discusses the relationship between the Dialogical Analysis of Discourse (DAD) and Applied Linguistics and shows the research data.

Part II presents *As vozes ‘centrípetas’ do contexto de reestruturação de cursos* [The ‘Centripetal’ Voices in the Context of Curriculum Reformation]: the official documents with which the research participants, the “subjects of practice,” dialogue in order to design a new curriculum for the language program. Federal Statements and Guidelines are presented in their context of production: the social and historical context in which they were produced; the novelties they introduce; the principles that determine them, and the voices that are in dialogue within them. In this Part, Nunes reveals the dialogicity found in the official documents, pointing to already-spoken discourses; response discourses that aim at the future; the guiding principles of the organization that is required by the State, among other aspects. Her analysis is always based on the discursive material elements of the texts.

Part III, titled *Luta discursiva dos reestruturadores dos Cursos de Letras* [Discourse Battle of the Curriculum Reformers from the Undergraduate Language Programs], starts with the context in which the SFB was created. Its creation was part of the strategies suggested by the *Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior* (Sinaes) [National Higher Education Evaluation System] to improve undergraduate programs whose evaluation results were low. The SFB was created so that “its members could – among other things – re-formulate the pedagogical projects of the undergraduate programs that were to be evaluated during a visit from Inep (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa) [National Institute of Educational Studies and Research] evaluators”¹⁰ (NUNES, 2019, p.180).¹¹ She shows the tension between voices from the SBF members and the dynamics of group discussion around the new project: on the one hand, the Institution and the SBF members acquiesced to the official “centripetal forces” that motivated the creation of the SBF; on the other hand, they offered resistance “due to the other forces, the centrifugal ones, which hindered the full

¹⁰ TN. The evaluators are professors from different public and/or private universities that are trained by INEP to evaluate undergraduate programs that are in the same knowledge area of the evaluators. These are in site evaluations that focus on “the quality of teachers, teaching conditions, pedagogical projects, and infrastructure” (<http://inep.gov.br/web/guest/higher-education-assessments>).

¹¹ In the original: “entre outras atribuições, seus membros realizassem a reformulação dos Projetos Pedagógicos dos Cursos, que seriam avaliados na visita in loco dos examinadores do Inep.”

adoption of legal requirements” (NUNES, 2019, p.191).¹² Consequently, they re-signified official discourse.

In the last chapter of Part III, Nunes analyzes a collective interview she conducted with the SFB members. Their responses were organized according to the guiding principles of curriculum design: “flexibility, interdisciplinarity, theory-practice relationship, and competence” (NUNES, 2019, p.247).¹³ As she analyzes different fragments of the interview, which were all transcribed, she highlights the characterizing movements of innovation and continuity of the SFB members: at times, they agree with official discourse and seek to adequate the new curriculum proposal for the undergraduate program to the resolutions of the Ministry of Education; at other times, they cannot go beyond the existing model of knowledge transmission.

Readers are surprised in the Final Words, as Nunes does not end the text with a conclusion based on the corpus she presented and analyzed, namely, the official documents, the pedagogical project designed by the SFB members, and the collective interview. Instead, she establishes a dialogue between the ideas from her analysis and the evaluation (accreditation) model used in European programs (more specifically, in Portugal), which has been in force since the Bologna Process. She encourages a “broader reflection,” which is important at a time when globalization is an undeniable fact. Moreover, she takes axiological positions throughout the text, always maintaining that “the focus of education should not be institutional competition in the market, but rather quality improvement, thus conceiving of education as a public asset” (NUNES, 2019, p.293).¹⁴

For Nunes, the SFB members did not follow one of the recommended guidelines for the new curriculum, namely the necessary unity between theory and practice. She states that they put forward “a curriculum proposal that offers few possibilities to develop interdisciplinary work in which contents from different areas would be articulated based on an effective theory-practice unity” (NUNES, 2019, p.298).¹⁵ This is

¹² In the original: “devido a forças outras, as centrífugas, que impediram o desenvolvimento pleno dos dispositivos legais.”

¹³ In the original: “flexibilidade interdisciplinaridade, relação teoria e prática e competência.”

¹⁴ In the original: “foco da educação não deve ser a concorrência institucional pelo mercado, mas a melhoria da qualidade, concebendo[-se] a educação como bem público.”

¹⁵ In the original: “uma proposta curricular com poucas possibilidades de desenvolvimento de um trabalho interdisciplinar, com articulação dos conteúdos das diversas áreas de estudo, a partir de efetiva unidade teoria-prática.”

exactly one of the criticisms made by Anísio Teixeira in the passage quoted before: “they [the philosophy colleges] were not able to teach the basic culture to liberal professions, nor the dominantly eclectic and practical culture to new secondary programs” (TEIXEIRA, 1994, p.129).¹⁶

As we end this review, we want to reaffirm that this work is important. Firstly, it shows what the academy has been producing in the interface between discourse studies and education. Secondly, it provides readers with an overview of the way dialogues between State and University discourses occur in practice. Finally, it encourages a responsible reflection on the needs/priorities/possibilities to reform the curriculum of undergraduate language programs.

As we live in a country where continuous reforms occur, it is important to bring to fore Darcy Ribeiro, the self-proclaimed “specialist in university reforms,” in this final paragraph. In the section Advertência [Warning] of his book titled *A universidade necessária* [*The Necessary University*], he acknowledges the existence of a “deep unhappiness with our university as it is.” However, he claims to have adopted a radical optimistic attitude: “Anyone like me who criticizes and proposes vehemently does so because he/she believes that it is possible to eliminate the connivance, overcome the mediocrity and alienation that he/she denounces” (RIBEIRO, 1975 [1969], p.3).¹⁷ This work is an example of belief in the possibility for change in our education.

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¹⁶ In the original: “as Faculdades de Filosofia não se revelaram capazes de ministrar a cultura básica para as profissões liberais nem a cultura predominantemente eclética e prática para os novos cursos secundários.”

¹⁷ In the original: “Quem como eu critica e propõe com tamanha veemência, o faz porque acredita que é praticável erradicar a conivência, superar a mediocridade e vencer a alienação que denuncia.”