

State and Society in the Process of Formulating Public Policy of Education: Contributions of Stephen Ball

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Abstract— *This article addresses the concepts and definitions in the process of formulating and implementing public policies, approaching the cycles of public policies, as well as strategies for better management in the elaboration of a policy, especially in education. The problem to be answered in this article is "what is the process of formulating public education policies regarding the contributions of Stephen Ball and others?". As a hypothesis, we point out that popular participation is the result of most of the definitions of education policy. The contributions of sociologist Stephen Ball are essential, in a perspective of stimulating and understanding education policies, as he is considered one of the sociologists with the most relevant publications on education policy studies in the United Kingdom and in other countries.*

I. INTRODUCTION

This article presents concepts and definitions of the process of formulating and implementing public policies. It essentially aims to know the entire process, from the birth of the public problem to its evaluation, it is crucial for the understanding of public policies, as well as the knowledge of all public policy cycles.

The problem to be answered in this article revolves around the understanding of the process of formulating education public policies, built on the contributions of Stephen Ball and others. In addition, this article also seeks to answer the following questions: What are public policies? What are the phases or cycles of a public policy? Is popular participation important in the elaboration of education policies, with foundation on school problems identified by local society?

As a hypothesis, we list that popular participation is very important and necessary in the definition of education policy. Pontual (1995), Freire (1991), Silva (1998) and Paro (2005) showed that popular participation is fundamental in school life, as they show local problems and needs. With this, the problem is specified, defined, then, a coherence in the implementation and in the financial investments, providing an opportunity for a more adequate education policy.

The contributions of the sociologist Stephen Ball are essential, from a perspective of stimulation and understanding of education policies, as he is considered today one of the sociologists with the most relevant publications on education policy studies in the United Kingdom and in other countries. However, we critically identified that the models raised by Ball that separate the phases of formulation and implementation ignore the

disputes and clashes over policy and reinforce the rationality of the management process (LASWELL, 1958).

According to Brazilian researchers Mainardes and Gandin, “Ball’s ideas are, in fact, broad and sophisticated and can be used not only by those who are more inquisitive about educational coverage and the sociology of education, but by researchers from several different areas and fields.” (MAINARDES; GANDIN, 2013, p. 256).

Based on these authors, we can infer that this perspective is not restricted to the educational scope, but rather interesting for scientific research aimed at fostering theories of political action, with the intention of unraveling what Ball calls the “neoliberal imaginary”.

Stephen Ball’s theory helps us to recognize that, from the theoretical/epistemological position, the research objects are relevant to the researcher. In his research, he presented robust arguments that support the shortcomings perceived in the studies of a positivist matrix, whose expectation is to drive “improvements” in the political-administrative processes through the management of implementing activities variables (ROSA, 2019, p.14).

The bibliographic research was carried out through a survey of the state of knowledge and the creation of a theoretical framework focused on an empirical overview of the main topics, involving writers who research the following themes: Educational Policies; Public policy; Popular Participation and Stephen Ball's Concepts. Methodology is perceived as the critical knowledge of the scientific process paths, inquiring, and questioning regarding its limits and possibilities (Demo, 1989). This article, with a bibliographic research policy, would follow the assumptions of qualitative methodology, unfolding from bibliographic research, which implies an orderly set of procedures to search for solutions, observing the research subject.

Regarding the search criteria, the chosen articles have authors with at least a master’s or PhD degree and with Qualis/Capes seal of certification. The research base in the search for scientific articles was directed to the SciELO index (CrossRef). Author-specific articles that specifically address public policy and mention Stephen Ball. In this sense, all texts found for the development of this research were searched using the following keywords: Public Policies and Stephen Ball.

II. METHODS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The bibliographic research served as a guide to the methodological path taken in this article. The assumptions of the qualitative methodology imply orderly procedures to

search for solutions to a set of questions, having the object of study in mind. The data obtained in the bibliographic research is presented and qualitatively compared to the findings in the literature survey, through data triangulation.

In this perspective, as the research is conducted to, even if indirectly through literary review, a certain population, this work can also be characterized as a social research, based on social involvement in public policies.

Neves (1996, p. 01) states that:

Social research has been strongly marked by studies that value the use of quantitative methods to describe and explain phenomena. Today, however, we can identify another form of approach that has been showing to be a promising possibility of investigation: it is the research identified as "qualitative". It initially appeared in the fields of Anthropology and Sociology. In the last 30 years this type of research has gained space in areas such as Psychology, Education and Business Administration.

The key components of a qualitative study, as defined by Strauss and Corbin (2008), are: first, the data source, which can come from various places, such as technical literature, non-technical literature, and interviews; and second, coding, which helps the researcher to use data analysis and organization tools.

A research experiment using the qualitative method does not fit into a fixed proposal. It encourages researchers to propose works that test new techniques using creativity and innovation. Qualitative research, in this regard, is a kind of investigation that tries to understand phenomena in their subjective nature (GODOY, 1995, p. 23).

Theoretical bibliographic research

The theoretical research method consisted of two construction types: the state of knowledge, which was called a survey of academic and scientific production; and the literature review, which led the authors to substantiate the contextualization of public policies.

State of Knowledge - Survey of Academic and Scientific Production

The state of knowledge is the recognition, registration and categorization that lead to a reflection and a synthesis on the scientific production of a certain area, in a certain period of time, covering articles, theses, dissertations and books on a subject or specific theme (Santos & Morosini, 2021). The search for the descriptors “Public Policies” and

“Stephen Ball” was conducted in the state of knowledge, which in this work is being called a survey of academic and scientific production. This research made an

investigation of academic production focusing on the selection of articles published in journals indexed in SciELO (CrossRef) with a time frame from 2010 to 2020.

Publications mentioning Stephen Ball and Public Policy (2010-2020)

DESCRIPTORS	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A
PUBLIC POLICY AND STEPHEN BALL	0	1	0	0	0	12	0	18	0	28	0	39	0	40	0	22	0	9	0	19	0	37

Label: A = Articles. B = Books.

Source: self-made

Based on the research of published scientific productions that mention Stephen Ball and Public Policies (2010-2020), three were selected that emphatically address Stephen Ball's approaches to Public Policies.

intertwined power relations in the elaboration of a document of a national nature, as well as presenting the context of the production of texts, from which the context of influence is not removed, on the contrary, once again the power relations are put. It is clear, at the end of the text, which groups were hegemonic, and which interests they served.

Descriptor Year	Title	Author	Year
Article 01:	Stephen Ball's Policy Cycle and the analysis of curricular policies: contextualizing the geography	Narayana Fernandes de Sousa	2014
Article 02:	An introduction to Stephen J. Ball's ideas and contributions to the topic of educational policy implementation	Sanny Silva da Rosa	2019
Article 03:	Stephen Ball's contributions to the field of educational policy	Regina Célia Linhares Hostins; Olívia Rochadel	2019

The article published on the online Journal of Policy and Educational Management by Regina Célia Linhares Hostins and Olívia Rochadel mentions that in view of the survey carried out and the main concepts identified in Stephen Ball's work, it may be considered how fruitful and consistent his theory is to support the analysis of educational policies in the current context. The collected and organized data certainly allows for further development and discussions which were not brought up for discussion due to the limits for writing scientific articles. Notwithstanding, they constitute a productive source of data that will subsidize the production of other scientific articles about the subject (HOSTINS; ROCHADEL, 2019).

In her article published in 2019 in the Journal of Theoretical and Epistemological Studies in Educational Policy author Sanny Silva da Rosa tries to present and explore some of the views and contributions of Stephen J. Ball for novice education policy experts. Ball is an English sociologist and researcher on the issue of implementing public education policies. The article is divided into three sections: the first argues Ball's contributions to the issue of implementation from the perspective of political action through a synopsis of his main works; the second discusses Ball's contributions to the issue of implementation from the perspective of political action and the third discusses Ball's contributions to the issue of implementation from the perspective of political action. The last section of the essay examines Stephen Ball's theoretical-methodological "toolbox" and the consequences of his epistemological perspective for research on the implementation of

Sousa (2014) emphasizes in his article that from the discussions of Ball's policy cycle (1994) the understanding of the PNLD and the PCN's as representations, and as such, they present the context of influence, articulating all

educational policy guided by his main intellectual influencers (ROSA, 2019).

Based on these three published productions, we highlight that all three publications contributed to the development of this article. Nevertheless, none of the productions stresses the State and the society in the process of formulating education policies with Stephen Ball's input.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Another methodological procedure was the literature review of the framework of authors cited and discussed in the theoretical framework as well as the bibliographic analysis of the state of the art. The review of literature provided the development of a theoretical context and a theoretical background, including writers or researchers who studied the following topics: teacher training; teaching performance and teacher-researcher.

Stephen Ball: Educational Policy Theory and Research

Stephen Ball is a scholar and professor at the Institute of Education at the University of London - United Kingdom. He has significant publications in the area of educational policies that have become quite important in other countries, but especially in the United Kingdom. Stephen Ball's ideas on educational policies were considered relevant in several countries such as the United Kingdom, Brazil, Africa, and India. Its main objective is to stimulate and understand how policies are created aiming to infer what lies behind a policy based on the consequences of market interests on education (BALL, 1990).

A criticism to be laid emphasis on is that Stephen Ball's knowledge comes from a poorly elucidated reality because the English model that he has formulated works a lot with agencies. There is a huge difference in applying Stephen Ball in a country that has these characteristics and was permeated by Thatcherism which practically privatized all education and works a lot with indicators and results, and to a continent-sized country like Brazil. Still, Ball, unlike this cycle of public policies, brought up a proposal with a variety of approaches that can actually be put to good use in Brazil. Ball defines as a cycle the context of influence, the context of text production and the context of practice (BOWE et al., 1992).

The elements of the presented context are interrelated and not only are they not defined as linear steps, but also do not have a temporal or sequential aspect. The contexts mentioned above present places, arenas, and interest groups. All involved in clashes and disputes (BOWE et al., 1992).

Stephen Ball has a relevant study on public policies in which he approaches the English model. We can critically show that these models that separate the phases of formulation and implementation ignore the disputes and clashes over policy and reinforce the rationality of the management process. (CORBITT, 1997; VIDOVIĆ, 1999; WALFORD, 2000; LOONEY, 2001; KIRTON, 2002; VIDOVIĆ; O'DONOGHUE, 2003; LOPES, 2004; LOPES; MACEDO, 2011).

One of Ball's important works, *Politics and policy making in Education*, written in 1990 addresses educational changes and the processes that shaped policy from the 1970s (the post-war consensus period) to the late 1980s – a period dominated by the neoliberal tendency of Thatcherism (ROSA, 2019, p. 4). The introduction of that book was based on the National Curriculum that was instituted in the 1988 Reform in England brought about by Margareth Thatcher. It aimed at standardizing teaching content in schools in three countries in the United Kingdom: Wales, England, and Northern Ireland.

In order to investigate different aspects of the reform, Ball built an ethnographic classification using various qualitative techniques such as documentary sources and interviews with actors in the political process. Regarding the analytical approach, the author classified it as "critical and deconstructive". This allowed him to carry out a kind of "disassembly" of things, to assess the distributive impact of existing policies and proposals. (BALL, 1990)

Another aspect addressed by Ball is the sociology of education that has made several contributions in recent years in terms of criticizing the management of schools and teachers at many forms of inspection and measurement (BALL, 2003). On the other hand, through conditions and possibilities, the sociology of education has developed an analytical view of power that has defined that schools and families have become the stage for experiments in the implementation of technology policies, as well as a field of research and knowledge.

Public Policies: a literature review

Public policies were presented and consolidated in the second half of the 20th century, with political science playing an important role in valuing the field of study. The knowledge of political analysis emerged in 1950, in the United States, and has changed and spread over the years, having public policies as an object of study. Its greater dissemination occurred through the publication of the book *The policy sciences* (1951), by Daniel Lerner and Harold D. Lasswell.

Considering its emergence and origin, the purpose and meaning of public policy will be briefly introduced using some definitions as a starting point. Public policies are

always linked to an action determined by the State, although these actions arise from the needs of a society, not from the State. Therefore, it can be said that public policies are designed with a social context as a basis (SOUZA, 2006, p.05).

Public policies have several actions that cause significant social impacts for a society, such as minimizing difference, as an example. These actions are decisive for countries with great social inequality like Brazil (GONÇALVES, 2017, p. 23).

For that matter, what is in evidence is the evaluation of policies, as they directly or indirectly address elements such as the relevance of a culture for democracy, the relationship between the quality offered and the financing conditions, the valorization of the expansion of access to school institutions, the meaning of qualified management and the results of student performance, configuring an approach focused on the materialization or effectiveness of public policies for basic education (KUNZ; ARAÚJO; CASTRATIONI, 2017, p. 38).

For better understanding of what a public policy is, Dye (1984) offers a brief definition. He emphasizes that it is what “the government chooses to do or not to do”. Mead (1995) defines it as a study addressed within politics that analyzes government through public issues. For Lynn (1980), it is a series of government actions that will generate specific effects. Peters (1986) follows an equivalent line: public policy is the sum of state activities, which act directly or through delegation. The best-known definition is that of Lasswell, who says that public policy decisions and analysis imply answering the subsequent questions: who wins what, why and what difference does it make.

In summary, public policies are created by actions triggered by the State. In Brazil, this takes place between the three levels of the Brazilian federation, that is, at the municipal, state, and federal levels, aiming to meet the demands of civil society. Regarding the creation process, it can be carried out with institutions that are not linked to the government, such as the private initiative. It stands out as keywords of what is a public policy elaborated in four traditional elements: totally dependent on government involvement; the identification of a problem; goal design; alignment of a method of action (DEUBEL, 2006).

It is important to highlight that public policies therefore arise from a social need that requires that the State meet the demands of this specific population. Thus, they are not aimed at the entire population of a country, for example, because they focus on solving a problem that emerges from a specific group, whose need for State action is central and essential.

Public Policy Cycles

Public policies are organized in cycles or phases that will be unfolded below. They are presented in sequence so that they are understood as a natural chain from one phase to another.

The first cycle takes place with the emergence of the public problem and its identification, which is when an individual or a group of people observe a circumstance in society and identify a problem. For instance: Brazil has a few professionals with higher education and many Brazilians do not even enter a bachelor’s degree. Most of those who do not access higher education claim lack of financial conditions. To face this problem, public policies such as FIES and PROUNI arise in order to facilitate funding for access to higher education (BRASIL, 2019).

The second cycle is to establish an agenda which is a set of problems that a government body or an authority decides to tackle. There are three kinds of agendas, the formal agenda, the political agenda, and the media agenda. The formal agenda consists of problems that the government decided to solve, the political agenda refers to problems that the political community considers relevant and the media agenda that concerns communication and influences the previous two. The process of establishing a government policy agenda (agenda-setting) comprises a set of problems considered to be a priority for a public agency and bring to light how specific issues, at a given moment, become important focusing the government's attention and becoming part of its agenda.

For example, at an earlier time, bullying in schools was not identified and characterized as nowadays. As it was not acknowledged, it did not pass through the first cycle of creating a public policy, which is the detection of a problem. Based on this, bullying was not part of the government agenda. Although, as soon as it was perceived in a systematic way, as it occurs today, bullying started to be countered. Identified as a socially systematized problem, it could now be implemented on the government agenda (ALVES; AZEVEDO; LOPES, 2016, p. 69).

The third phase is the formulation of the public policy in question, which constitutes alternatives that are elaborated to face a problem or situation. It occurs after its entry into the governmental agenda where possible solutions to the policy objectives are defined. These are the

lines of action and programs to be developed, the strategies used to achieve the established goals. This phase will be approached in greater depth later, including the role of the State and the society in the process of formulating education policies (RAEDER, 2014, p. 127).

The fourth cycle of public policy formulation is the decision. It consists of the decision-making process that involves the entire legislative framework of the country. In that regard, this phase goes from the enactment of legislation by the Legislative Power to the sanction or veto of the Executive Power. Adverse decisions by the Judiciary are also applicable in all its instances, within the scope of jurisprudence, judgments, precedents, etc.

The fifth stage of this process is the implementation of public policies. Implementation is nothing more than putting into practice everything that was thought, elaborated, reformulated, and planned. Generally speaking, implementation implies actions that are intended to achieve the goals set out in previous decisions. It is when the planned actions reach the beneficiary defined by the public policy.

The sixth phase is the evaluation of public policy. This step is the result of the entire public policy development. The main role of this phase is analyzing the proposal made and diagnosing the positive and negative effects it caused. The evaluation is a set of what has been elaborated and reformulated. It comprises all public policy cycles and assesses the changes and social results initiated by them (RAEDER, 2014, p. 127).

As the seventh and final cycle foreseen in this entire process, there is the possibility of extinction of public policy, which can occur due to several reasons and under various processes of dissolution or replacement. The decision to dissolve a public policy comes from an evaluation that points out the non-achievement of the pre-established goals either for not having solved the problem or for not being able to solve the demand of a specific population. When a public policy reaches this point, the policy cycle is expected to be interrupted (HOWLETT et al., 2013). When the evaluation of a public policy is carried out it diagnoses the value of the public policy. If the implemented actions are proved ineffective, the process for the discontinuation or replacement of the public policy begins.

Education Policies and Popular Participation

Popular participation is defined as the direct participation of the population in government actions, as well as in the implementation or formulation of public policies. Popular participation imposes room for citizenship that provides an improvement to the existing representative system and direct democracy. We list a

theoretical and political critique of the functioning of the democratic system in the world and in Brazil (ENAP, 2018, p. 7).

Educational initiatives are government policy plans guided by principles and ideas that address school populations and are implemented by education management professionals (MENDONÇA et al., 2020, p. 169).

There have been good experiences in Brazil with popular participation in the processes of policy definition. As an example of two recent popular participation experiences there are the "Ten Year Education Plan" and the "World Social Forum". The Decennial Education Plan was a proposal of Brazilian society. It was a pioneer and historically marked movement in the late 1990s. On the other hand, The World Social Forum was based on popular mobilization against neoliberal policies, which points to an "inclusive" discourse, however it leaves the poor population aside and reduces their possibilities of participating in the process of socialization of goods produced worldwide (ARELARO, 2007, p. 903).

In recent decades, the instruments of popular participation in governments and in the formulation and management of public policies have been very relevant in the transformation of how to manage the Brazilian State (ENAP, 2018, p. 6).

The principle of democratic management of education included in Brazil's Federal Constitution of 1988 was a very controversial issue because it limited the democratic management of education to the public sphere. According to article 206, item VI of the National Constitution, democratic management is restricted to "public education, in accordance with the law" (BRASIL, 1988).

According to Horta (1998):

The great leap in the 1988 Constitution is the fact that "[...] the right to education is no longer respected not only when compulsory education is not offered by the government, but also when this offer is made irregular." (HORTA, 1998, p. 26-27).

In Arelaro's view (2007, p. 901), this "distraction", which in fact is understood as a "limitation" to the democratic character of the Constitution, had the broad and transparent popular participation as an incentive, which really portrayed a political struggle within which conservative and privatist pedagogical thinking was the winner at that moment. This situation was resolved with

the implementation of democratic management in schools, which will be dealt with in more detail below. Democratic management and popular participation are based on “participatory pedagogies” that have a positive impact on learning and are developed from a pedagogical act that involves participation and autonomy, both assumptions of learning itself. So, training a citizen to participate is training him to participate in the destiny of his country with responsibility.

Educational policies, within the scope of the three instances of educational management of teaching, which are totally different at the municipal, state, and federal levels, are defined as a more solidary action among the public spheres. The federative scope is responsible for the distribution and collaboration, making the system more equitable among them, sharing tasks and responsibilities (ARELARO, 2007, p. 901).

In 1990, the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA), Law n.8.069/90, established the right of parents, which foresaw the importance of parents' rights in participating in the pedagogical work of schools. It is good to emphasize that the participation and collaboration of parents in schools is of great value, as well as the monitoring of the entire educational process. Research shows that students, schools, and parents benefit from this act. One of the most important factors for this process is the alignment of family and school. Both are great influencers in children's development (BRASIL, 1990).

Comer (1984) emphasizes the importance of parents in school and emphasizes the gain of formal learning for students. This results in a better school environment and reduces family conflicts with the school. The ECA approved in the early 1990s enshrined this right. However, this right was never implemented and was therefore little respected in schools. According to the ECA, parents could monitor their children's development and their assessments, in addition to being able to attend and participate in the pedagogical proposals developed at the school (BRASIL, 1990, Art. 53, Single Paragraph). Notwithstanding, it is important to point out that the participation of parents in school had a significant increase.

For that matter, in 1996, the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDB), Law n. 9,394/96, following the process of parents' participation in schools, encouraged each school to propose greater collective participation of the local and school community, involving both in pedagogical projects and in school councils (BRASIL, 1996, Art. 14).

III. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article discussed the concepts and definitions of the process of formulating and implementing public policies. The main purpose was to comprehend the entire process, from the birth of the public problem to its evaluation. This is crucial for the understanding of public policies, as well as all public policy cycles.

The problem answered in this article was “Based on the contributions of Stephen Ball, how is the process of formulating public education policies with popular participation? In addition, the research questions were as follows: What are public policies? What are the phases or cycles of public policy? Is popular participation important in the elaboration of education policies, based on school problems identified by local society?”

As a basic hypothesis, popular participation is considered to have a significant role in defining educational policies. Pontual (1995), Freire (1991), Silva (1998) e Paro (2005) demonstrate that popular participation is essential in school life because it brings out the local problems and needs. Henceforth, the problem is defined and specified giving coherence in the implementation and in the financial investments, providing a more adequate education policy.

The contributions of the sociologist Stephen Ball were essential to the discussion proposed, due to his fostering of the understanding of education policy. Nowadays, Ball is one of the sociologists to have the most relevant publications on the studies of educational policies in the United Kingdom besides other countries.

Stephen Ball's theory helps us to recognize that the theoretical and epistemological position changes the relevance of the object to the researcher. In his research, he presented robust arguments that support the shortcomings perceived in the studies of a positivist matrix, whose expectation is to drive “improvements” in the political-administrative processes through the management of implementing activities variables (ROSA, 2019, p.14).

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