

ARTICLES

**São Paulo state education plan (2016-2026):
debates and contests**

***Plano estadual de educação de São Paulo (2016-2026):
debates e embates***

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the participation of civil society and political society and the construction of hegemony in the process of elaborating and approving the State Education Plan (PEE-SP 2016-2016). This qualitative research involved semi-structured interviews and documental analysis. The analysis of the construction process of the São Paulo education plan suggests that its Department of Education was effectively uninterested in discussing the São Paulo education policy in a forum that gathered a group of entities that were excluded from educational decisions in the previous two decades, mainly because its interlocutors included sectors of civil society that were linked to capital. In view of this, little progress has been made in educational planning with the PEE-SP 2016-2026.

Keywords: Education Plan, Democratic Participation, Civil Society

Resumo

Este artigo tem o objetivo de analisar a participação da sociedade civil e da sociedade política e a construção de hegemonia no processo de elaboração e aprovação do Plano Estadual de Educação (PEE-SP 2016-2026). Foi realizada uma pesquisa de abordagem qualitativa, envolvendo entrevistas semiestruturadas e análise documental. A análise do processo de construção do plano de educação paulista sugere que a Secretaria de Educação (Seduc) não tinha efetivo interesse em discutir a política educacional paulista num Fórum que congregava um conjunto de entidades que foram aliadas das decisões educacionais nas duas décadas anteriores, principalmente porque os interlocutores da Seduc eram setores da sociedade civil vinculados ao capital. À vista disso, pouco se avançou no planejamento educacional com o PEE-SP 2016-2026.

Palavras-chave: Plano de Educação, Participação Democrática, Sociedade Civil

Introduction

Advocating for public schools, organized sectors of civil society in São Paulo contributed to the development of educational proposals for the Federal Constitution of 1988 (CF, 1988). They also prepared a proposal for the Law of Guidelines and Standards for National Education (Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional, LDB) and monitored the eight-year legislative process (1988-1996) in the National Congress, ensuring that São Paulo would have an education plan in place by the 2000s. The political and organizational momentum built in the late 1970s and 1980s as part of the struggle to end the dictatorial regime and establish a society with democratic institutions and culture laid the foundation for the State Forum in Defense of Public Schools (Fórum Estadual em Defesa da Escola Pública, Fedep-SP) to draft a State Education Plan. Known as the Sociedade Paulista Proposal, it was submitted to the Legislative Assembly of the State of São Paulo (Assembleia Legislativa do Estado de São Paulo, Alesp) as Bill No. 1,074/2003a by Deputy Carlinhos de Almeida, a member of the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT).

Despite representing diverse perspectives, Fedep-SP maintained that the State Education Plan (Plano Estadual de Educação, PEE-SP) should embody a vision of education:

“Understood as a tool for comprehensive training, the struggle for citizenship rights, and social emancipation, preparing individuals and society for the responsibility of **collectively building a project of inclusion and social quality for the State of São Paulo**” (Fedep-SP, 2003, p. 14, emphasis in the original).

Like the Brazilian Society’s Proposal for the National Education Plan (Plano Nacional de Educação, PNE) 2001-2010, the Sociedade Paulista Proposal offers an analysis of the conditions for delivering both basic and higher education in the state, along with goals and guidelines/objectives for the decade.

Following the Fedep-SP initiative and with the PEE bill under review in Alesp, the São Paulo state government submitted its own PEE proposal, labeled Bill No. 1,066/2003b. Geraldo Alckmin was the governor at the time, while Gabriel Chalita served as Secretary of Education. However, there was little interest from the State Department of Education (Secretaria de Estado da Educação, Seduc-SP)¹ in fostering a participatory and democratic process to develop a state education plan.

Among the many options available, the government could have regulated the State Education Forum (Fórum Estadual de Educação, FEE-SP), which was established by Decree No. 21,074/1983 during the administration of Franco Montoro (1983-1987). This initiative, however, did not materialize until 2013, following Resolutions SE 9/2013 and SE 56/2014, driven by the need to formally comply with paragraph 2 of Article 8 of Law No. 13,005/2014, which mandates the participation of representatives from educational communities and civil society in the formulation of educational plans for states, the Federal District, and municipalities.

Additionally, there was little interest from the São Paulo government in passing a PEE for that decade, as it did not actively support the legislative process at Alesp, while Bill No. 1,066/2003 was withdrawn for re-examination by Governor José Serra in 2008, being subsequently shelved. Despite efforts by deputies from PT and the Socialism and Freedom Party (Partido Socialismo e Libertade, PSOL) to reintroduce the PEE bill at Alesp, these attempts

¹ According to Resolution SE No. 18/2019, the acronym for the Department of Education changed from SEE-SP to Seduc-SP.

were unsuccessful, leaving the state without an education plan during the period when PNE 2001-2010 was enforced (Minto, 2022).

Discussions surrounding the development of a State Education Plan resumed only after the approval of PNE 2014-2024. FEE-SP was eventually regulated under the administration of Geraldo Alckmin (2011–2014 and 2015–2018) and Education Secretaries Herman Voorwald (2011–2015) and Renato Nalini (2016-2018).

Resolution SE 9/2013 aimed to bring the forum in line with national legislation and reflected the restructuring of Seduc in 2011 through Decree No. 57,141/2011. The goals included:

- The institutionalization of participatory educational planning mechanisms that prioritize dialogue as a method and democracy as a foundation;
- The deliberations of the 2010 National Education Conference (CONAE) and the National Education Conference: São Paulo State Stage (CONAE-SP);
- The need to translate and implement educational policies within the Department of Education's actions that ensure democratic management and the social quality of education;
- [And] the Department of Education's role in coordinating the state education policy and harmonizing the state and municipal education systems.

The legislation outlines Seduc's purpose of establishing democratic participation mechanisms for the planning of the educational policy in the state, in contrast to the trends that had prevailed since 1995, when the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira, PSDB) assumed control of São Paulo's government and implemented neoliberal policies, the New Public Management (Nova Gestão Pública, NGP), and managerialism as its political-ideological orientation (Jacomini, 2022).

Also during the 2011-2014 administration, while Seduc initiated a movement of consultation with education professionals in 2011, as reported by Voorwald and Palma Filho (2013), the subsequent policy primarily engaged with sectors of civil society aligned with capital. This led to the continued implementation of managerial approaches to education (Jacomini et al., 2022), trends had been ongoing since the beginning of the cycle of PSDB administrations in

São Paulo², as noted by Jacomini et al. (2022), in their analysis of SEDUC's programs and projects from 1995 to 2018, particularly regarding the participation of school communities.

Regarding the composition of FEE-SP, Resolution SE No. 56/2014 provided for the participation of representatives from public bodies, local authorities, educational entities, social movements, and sectors of society focused on improving state education.

Of the 67 members of FEE-SP, 11 represented political society, including seven from Seduc, one from the Department of Economic Development, Science and Technology, one from the Alesp Education and Culture Commission, one from the State Education Council, and one from the Public Ministry of the State of São Paulo. Out of the 56 civil society representatives, eight were connected to or advocated political-ideological positions aligned with the dominant classes or groups close to them: The Center for Studies and Research in Education, Culture and Community Action (CENPEC), the Carlos Chagas Foundation, the Ayrton Senna Institute, the Todos pela Educação Movement, the National Service for Commercial Learning (SENAC), the National Service for Industrial Learning (SENAI), the Social Service of Commerce (SESC), and the Social Service for Industry (SESI). The other 48 representatives comprise sectors of civil society with diverse positions on educational issues, but their primary connections are with the struggles of education professionals and students, as well as those advocating for public education, social justice, and democracy.

These class affiliations do not eliminate the possibility of shared educational agendas between the two broad segments of civil society, but they do highlight the limitations to building a common agenda in support of public education from a class-based perspective.

An analysis of Resolutions SE No. 9/2013 and SE No. 56/2014 suggests that São Paulo's educational policy could be debated and formulated in a participatory and democratic manner, including the drafting of a PEE-SP proposal to be submitted to Alesp, as intended in one of the Forum's purposes. However, a closer examination of the process of drafting and approving the São Paulo education plan at Alesp reveals that participation and democracy were constrained by government actions.

This article seeks to analyze the role of civil society and political society, as well as the construction of hegemony, in the drafting and approval process for PEE-SP 2016-2026. The

² PSDB governed the state of São Paulo for seven consecutive terms, from 1995 to 2022.

text is divided into five sections, in addition to this introduction. We first present the research methodology and theoretical framework, followed by an analysis of FEE-SP's performance in formulating a proposal for the state education plan, the legislative process of Bill No. 1,083/2015b at Alesp, and the negotiations between the government, civil society entities, and Alesp. We conclude with reflections on the limitations of the process, whether due to government actions or the lack of unity among the progressive sectors³ of civil society.

Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology⁴

Our analysis of PEE-SP 2016-2026 construction process is guided by a Gramscian framework, particularly the concepts of the integral State and hegemony. The concept of the integral State incorporates both coercion and persuasion, which are present in civil and political societies. The Sardinian thinker describes civil society as the network of “private” institutions that primarily rely on persuasion to construct hegemonies around key ideas and establish State policies. These institutions include the press, the church, schools, unions, and various social organizations. Meanwhile, political society refers to State institutions in a more restricted sense, such as the executive, legislative, judiciary, and armed forces, whose actions are dominated by coercive elements (Gramsci, 2014).

The concept of the Integral State is intrinsically tied to that of hegemony. Gramsci argues that both the maintenance and transformation of social order in contemporary societies depend on the construction of hegemony—meaning the ability of a class, class fraction, or group to lead other groups or society as a whole, primarily through persuasion, although coercion still plays a role. Hegemony is understood as a connecting element between political and civil societies (Gramsci, 2014).

The concept of hegemony in Gramscian thought plays a key role in understanding contemporary democratic capitalist societies, as it provides insights into how the ruling class exercises power and the strategies embedded in class struggles, particularly in relation to consensus (Jacomini, 2022, p. 125).

³ This article defines progressive sectors as those committed to defending social rights, as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution.

⁴ Research approved by the Ethics Committee of Universidade Federal de São Paulo, No. 5,484,270.

In addition to Gramsci's concept of the Integral State (which encompasses civil and political societies), we also draw on Wood's (2011) analysis of democracy in capitalist societies and Pateman's theory of participatory democracy (1992). While recognizing limitations, we believe that democracy can be expanded, especially when supported by education, to enable broader participation in decision-making processes in public spaces.

We conducted qualitative research, which involved both interviews and documentary analysis (Lüdke & André, 1986). The main documents analyzed included: the minutes of the State Education Forum meetings where discussions and the formulation of the State Education Plan proposal took place—filed with Alesp as Substitute No. 2 to Bill No. 1,083/2015 by Deputy José Zico Prado (PT); the transcripts of the six public hearings held between October 19 and October 27, 2015, aimed at debating the three proposals for PEE-SP being processed at Alesp, particularly with the academic and school communities; and the transcript of the Alesp plenary session that debated and approved Law No. 16,279, on July 8, 2016 (Lei 16.279, 2016).

The interviews form a critical component of the data collection for the “analytical construction/reconstruction” of the PEE-SP preparation process, as they capture the perceptions, understandings, and interpretations of individuals who participated in the process as key actors. We employed unstructured or semi-structured interview techniques (Richardson et al., 2015; Lüdke & André, 1986), engaging with the interviewees to understand their motivations, interpretations, and stances on the subject of study. The interviews were conducted remotely, at dates and times agreed upon with the interviewees, and were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Table 1 presents data about the research participants.

Table 1

Subjects participating in the research.

Position at the period of the analysis	Name	Education
Leader of the PSOL bench who filed the Sociedade Paulista Proposal at Alesp	Raul Marcelo Junior	Graduate in Law. Formerly a teacher at the state school system
Leader of the PT bench who filed the PEE-SP proposal of the FEE-SP at Alesp	José Zico Prado	Toolmaker trained from Senai
PEE-SP rapporteur at the Alesp Education and Culture Commission at the time PEE-SP projects were being processed	Roberto Engler	Bachelor and PhD in Mathematics
FEE-SP Coordinator	João Cardoso Palma Filho	Graduated in Natural History, Law, Pedagogy, Master, and PhD. Formerly a teacher in the state school system and is currently a professor at Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho. Worked as deputy secretary of education from 2011 to November 2013
CEO of Apeoesp	<i>Maria Izabel Azevedo Noronha (Bebel)</i>	Graduated in Literature and Master in School Administration. Joined the São Paulo state school system in 1986
Adusp Representative	César Augusto Minto	Graduated in Biological Sciences, Master, and PhD in Education. Former state schoolteacher and currently a retired professor at the Faculty of Education at Universidade de São Paulo (USP)
Government representative (Seduc), during Herman Voorwald's term as Secretary of Education	Mara Augusta Pereira ⁵	Graduated in History and Social Sciences and PhD (<i>lato sensu</i>) in Social History.
Was a representative of the government, working at Seduc during the period when José Renato Nalini served as Secretary of Education.	Wilson Levy Braga da Silva Neto ⁶	Bachelor and PhD in Law

Source: Own preparation based on data collected through interviews.

⁵ Fictitious name to preserve the identity of the Seduc career server. Served at the Foundation for the Development of Education (Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Educação) in the Educational Data Management department. As for the other interviewees, since they are well-known and easily identifiable based on the positions they held during the drafting and approval of the PEE-SP, we have kept their actual names, as agreed upon and consented to by them.

⁶ Served as a Special Advisor at Seduc from January 2016 to August 2017 and as Chief of Staff from August 2017 to May 2018.

Besides the individuals interviewed for this research, we also utilized interviews conducted for the study titled “Educational Policy in the State Education Network of São Paulo (1995-2018)⁷,” from 2020.

The analysis categories were organized based on the interview content that stood out either due to its frequency or its explanatory contribution to the object of study.

The documentary analysis carried out in this research is grounded in an examination of the social and political context in which the document was produced (Cellard, 2008). Table 2 presents the documents analyzed

Table 2
Documents analyzed.

Document type	Description	Date
Transcription	Seminar held by Alesp’s Education and Culture Commission to discuss education plan proposals	09/08/2015
Transcription	Public Hearing held at the Sorocaba City Council and coordinated by Alesp’s Education and Culture Commission	10/19/2015
Transcription	Public Hearing held at the Campinas City Council, coordinated by Alesp’s Education and Culture Commission.	10/21/2015
Transcription	Public Hearing held at the Araraquara City Council, coordinated by Alesp’s Education and Culture Commission	10/22/2015
Transcription	Public Hearing held at the São José do Rio Preto City Council, coordinated by Alesp’s Education and Culture Commission	10/23/2015
Transcription	Public Hearing held at the Santos City Council, coordinated by Alesp’s Education and Culture Commission	10/26/2015
Transcription	Public Hearing held at Alesp and coordinated by the Education and Culture Commission.	10/27/2015

⁷ This research was funded by the São Paulo Research Foundation (Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo, FAPESP), process No. 2018/09983-0, coordinated by Professor Marcia Aparecida Jacomini, and approved by the Ethics Committee of Universidade Federal de São Paulo, process No. 0947/2019.

Minutes of the São Paulo State Education Forum ⁸ (Fórum Estadual de Educação de São Paulo, FEE-SP)	19th, 20th, 24th, 25th, 29th, 32nd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 43rd, 44th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st meetings	11/19 and 12/17/2023; 4/2; 10/6 and 5/8/2014; 3/2, 24/5, 2/6, 7/7, 11/8, 22/9, 20/10, and 10/11/2015; 03/29, 4/26, 6/28, 7/6, 08/30, 10/5, 11/9, and 12/13/2016 ⁹
Bill 1.035/2015	Proposal for the State Education Plan of Sociedade Paulista, substitute 1 to Bill 1083/2015	2015
Bill	Proposal for the State Education Plan from the State Education Forum, substitute 2 to Bill 1083/2015	2015
Bill 1.083/2015	Executive's Proposal for a State Education Plan	2015
Amendments to Bill 1.083/2015	156 amendments presented to Bill 1083/2015	2015
Substitute No. 2 to Bill 1.082	PEE-SP proposal prepared by FEE-SP	2015
Law No. 16.279/2016	Approves the São Paulo State Education Plan and provides for other measures	07/08/2016

Source: Own preparation based on the material and legislation presented in the table.

Understanding that the rationality present in the documents is not predetermined and that the quality of the questions is fundamental, both to avoid distortions and to expand the dialogue while capturing the essence of the sources, we revisit the necessary methodological vigilance that the researcher must maintain regarding themselves and their relationship with the research topic and sources, as presented by Thompson (1981).

Considering the object of study and the research objectives, the content of the documents and interviews was organized into the following categories: the process of drafting the PEE-SP proposal by FEE-SP, the processing of PEE-SP proposals at Alesp, and the

⁸ We analyzed 21 minutes of meetings held between 2013 and 2016, but these do not account for all FEE-SP meetings. This was due to the fact Seduc did not comply with our request, submitted through the Freedom of Information Law. There was also an attempt to obtain the minutes from the Forum department, but they did not have them. Ultimately, we were able to acquire some of them from individuals who participated in the Forum at the time and served as secretaries in the meetings.

⁹ The following are the dates on which each of the meetings took place.

negotiations between the government, entities, and the Legislative Assembly for the approval of PEE-SP.

To aid understanding, Table 3 presents the names, political parties, and governing periods of those who led the state of São Paulo from 2001 to 2018.

Table 3

Governors of São Paulo – 2001 to 2018.

Name	Party	Period
Geraldo Alckmin	PSDB	3/6/2001 to 3/31/2006
Cláudio Lembo	PFL	3/31/2006 to 1/01/2007
José Serra	PSDB	1/1/2007 to 4/02/2010
Alberto Goldman	PSDB	4/2/2010 to 1/01/2011
Geraldo Alckmin	PSDB	1/1/2011 to 4/06/2018

Source: Own preparation, based on information from Alesp-SP's website.

The Process of Preparing the PEE-SP Proposal by FEE-SP

Professor João Cardoso Palma Filho coordinated FEE-SP from 2013 to 2016. Until November 2013, when he stepped down from his position as Deputy Secretary¹⁰, he represented Seduc at the Forum. Afterward, he continued as a representative of “an evaluation institution called ACP¹¹. “This entity invited me as a representative.”¹²

According to its coordinator at the time, the Forum fulfilled the task of drafting a PEE-SP proposal with the participation of its members, without any imposition from government representatives regarding the content or operation of the proposal, indicating the existence of a democratic process up until the finalization and submission of the proposal to the São Paulo State Department of Education (SEDUC). According to Palma Filho, the most important task of the Forum “was to draft the State Education Plan, so the responsibility for preparing the plan belonged to the Forum. It wasn’t even the responsibility of the Department of Education.”¹³

¹⁰ João Cardoso Palma Filho was Deputy Secretary of Seduc from 2011 to November 2013.

¹¹ Coordinated Research Advisory.

¹² Interview conducted on 10/31/2022, available in a restricted repository.

¹³ Interview conducted on 10/31/2022, available in a restricted repository.

The majority opinion within the Forum was to draft a comprehensive proposal for an education plan, following the format of the National Education Plan 2014-2024, to be submitted to Alesp, as the body included representatives from both political (government) and civil society.

At that time, Seduc indicated its desire to conduct a democratic process of discussion and development of a PEE-SP proposal to be forwarded to Alesp, assigning this task to the Forum, in accordance with the guidelines of the National Education Plan 2014-2024. However, it maintained close oversight and a degree of control over the process, not only because the Forum operated within the Seduc building but also through interactions aimed at aligning the PEE proposal with Seduc's educational policies, resulting in an undemocratic approach by modifying the proposal without consulting the Forum, despite its involvement in the drafting process. In the words of Palma Filho¹⁴:

We completed the plan, the project, and sent it to Professor Herman, the Secretary of Education. He conducted a review, and the Department decided to add three more goals to the plan we had prepared, meaning it would now have 23 goals¹⁵. A discussion followed, and the Forum ultimately decided not to accept the changes.

The matter did not pass and was referred to the Legislative Assembly via a parliamentarian. Negotiations took place between various entities, primarily unions led by APEOESP, and the PT bench agreed to take up the presentation of the project prepared by the Forum.

The secretary's actions caused surprise and outrage among the Forum's participants, leading to the withdrawal of some civil society representatives and the introduction of three different PEE-SP proposals at Alesp, clearly disregarding the participatory process and the quality of the proposal. According to Minto¹⁶, the departure of these entities was motivated by Seduc's interference in the Forum's work.

At the 36th meeting, on August 11, 2015, Professor Palma Filho reported that the Forum's PEE had been filed as a replacement for the government's project¹⁷. In the following

¹⁴ Interview conducted on 10/31/2022, available in a restricted repository.

¹⁵ In addition to the 20 goals in the Forum's proposal, Seduc added goal 21, which dealt with the municipalization of the early years of elementary education; goal 22, which referred to the implementation of a new secondary education model; and goal 23, which concerned a new training model for Seduc's education professionals. As will be shown throughout the text, goal 23 was the only that made it into PEE-SP 2016-2026 law, listed as goal 21.

¹⁶ César Augusto Minto, in an interview on 10/13/2022, available in a restricted repository.

¹⁷ Own transcript of the 36th meeting of the São Paulo State Education Forum, held on August 1, 2015, available in a restricted repository.

meetings, the Forum's participation in public hearings on the PEE-SP was recorded, along with their efforts within Alesp to support the Forum's PEE-SP proposal (*Substitute No. 2 to Bill No. 11,083/2015*).

Seduc's movement reveals not only a disregard for the participatory democratic process and the Forum's responsibility to draft an education plan proposal for Alesp's evaluation, but also an indication that, aside from alignment with the National Education Plan 2014-2024, the state plan should align with Seduc's policies, which were being discussed and implemented without the participation of the majority of the entities that made up the Forum, as highlighted by a statement from Professor Herman Voorwald: "The approach was to lead, for São Paulo to take the lead, to signal that this would be an initiative by the state of São Paulo, perhaps to contribute something to the national discussion on secondary education."¹⁸

Contrary to Seduc's educational policies, some representatives of the Forum's entities had experience from national discussions on education plans. Their actions at FEE-SP were based on concepts debated in the 1980s and 1990s and the formulation of the Brazilian Society's PNE proposal¹⁹.

The proposals for Brazilian and São Paulo education, as ten-year plans outlined in the Brazilian Society's PNE and the 2003 PEE of the Sociedade Paulista, were notably different from the educational policy implemented by Seduc. Thus, in addition to disagreements regarding Seduc's approach to the proposal collectively constructed within the Forum, there were also content-based disagreements concerning the FEE-SP proposal, particularly after Seduc altered the text. This was highlighted by the entities²⁰ that had worked on updating the 2003 Sociedade Paulista PEE diagnosis and proposals, which were filed with Alesp by Deputy Raul Marcelo (PSOL) as Bill No. 1,035/2015 (Bill No. 1,035, 2015a) and later processed as Substitute No. 1 to Bill No. 1,083/2015b (the government's project).

¹⁸ Interview given on 11/27/2020 for the research "Educational Policy in the State Education Network of São Paulo (1995-2018)," available in a restricted file. One of the three goals added by Seduc to the FEE-SP proposal was related to secondary education, aligning with the national reform that was underway.

¹⁹ César Augusto Minto, in an interview on 10/13/2022, available in a restricted repository.

²⁰ Educational Action, USP Teachers' Association, Universidade Estadual Paulista (Unesp) Teachers Association, National Campaign for the Right to Education, Center for Education and Society Studies, São Paulo Early Childhood Education Forum, EJA São Paulo Forum, Paulo Freire Institute and MOVA-SP.

Although Seduc claimed that the changes made to the Forum's proposal were based on a public consultation conducted by the organization, Palma Filho²¹ asserts that he never had access to the results of such consultation: "I wanted to see these thousands of suggestions. To this day, I haven't had access to them; we didn't receive any data related to it, and the commission, oddly enough, didn't include anyone from the State Forum."

Given Seduc's stance and the absence of a state education conference, the entities' letter²² requested that Alesp convene thematic and regional public hearings "with a schedule published in advance, to hear and debate the State Education Plan proposals" (Ação Educativa et al., 2015, p. 3). The Forum also formalized the same demand²³.

The representative of the Union of Official Education Teachers of the State of São Paulo (Sindicato dos Professores do Ensino Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, Apeoesp), Maria Isabel Azevedo Noronha, also worked with Alesp to hold public hearings. "And I approached Capez and said: 'Capez, I'd like a public hearing so we can debate the government's plan, because we, the Forum, have a State Education Plan.'"²⁴

Thus, a process that was initially democratic and participatory concluded with the submission of three different bills for a state education plan to Alesp. Requests and pressure from various entities prompted Alesp's Education and Culture Commission to organize six public hearings across the state to engage the public in discussions regarding the PEE-SP proposals under consideration at Alesp. The hearings were held on the following dates and in the following cities: 10/19/2015, Sorocaba; 10/21/2015, Campinas; 10/22/2015, Araraquara; 10/23/2015, São José do Rio Preto; 10/26/2015 Santos; 10/27/2015; São Paulo.

²¹ Interview conducted on 10/31/2022, available in a restricted repository.

²² Letter of repudiation titled "Por uma efetiva participação popular na construção do Plano de Educação do Estado de São Paulo e fortalecimento das instâncias participativas" (Ação Educativa et al., 2015).

²³ According to Paulo Filho, in an interview on 10/31/2022, available in a restricted repository.

²⁴ Interview conducted on 11/30/2022, available in a restricted repository.

Processing of PEE-SP Proposals at Alesp

The development of a state education plan proposal by FEE-SP, based on a democratic and participatory process that included representatives from both political society and civil society, brought with it the expectation that a bill filed with Alesp would reflect what was agreed upon during the debates. *Stricto sensu*, this would not represent the proposal of any single group within the Forum. It turns out that, in democratic processes where differing viewpoints clash, what is collectively constructed—through theoretical and political argumentation and persuasion—results in a hegemonic proposal that includes both government and civil society. This presupposed that the parties were open to listening, analyzing, and building consensus, which is challenging when there is a broad diversity of conceptions and political stances, as was the case, particularly between political society and significant sectors of civil society that were more active in making propositions and participating in debates.

Given this, the proceedings at Alesp represented a second venue for debate on the education plan and the passage of the law that would establish the PEE-SP for the following decade. However, as previously discussed, Seduc's actions to modify the proposal drafted in FEE-SP meetings triggered resistance among Forum members, leading to the existence of three competing education plan proposals.

Therefore, Bill No. 1,083/2015 from the government, Bill No. 1,035/2015 (an update of Bill No. 1,074/2003, known as the Sociedade Paulista Proposal), and Substitute No. 2, a proposal drafted by FEE-SP, were filed. The report by deputy Roberto Engler (PSDB), the rapporteur for PEE-SP in Alesp's Education and Culture Committee, did not incorporate any of the proposed substitutes or other amendments presented by opposition deputies, as noted by deputy João Paulo Rillo (PT) at the public hearing on 10/23/2015 in São José do Rio Preto.

The report failed to accept a single amendment from opposition deputies and ignored both substitute bills presented by PSOL and the Workers' Party bench. It was poised to be approved swiftly, going to the Plenary, and if not for the resistance from Apeoesp, Upes, UEE, Adusp, DCE, and the Fatecs, a plan would have likely been approved that, unfortunately, from a legal and procedural standpoint, would have come from nowhere and led to no place²⁵.

²⁵ Own transcription available in a restricted repository.

Given the context and the government's majority in Alesp, as well as its capacity to pass its proposal, both the entities that remained and those that withdrew from the Forum, supported by the mobilization of education professionals and students, organized efforts to modify Bill No. 1,083/2015, given the debate in Alesp centered around this bill. By the time the public hearings took place, this bill had already been approved by the "Constitution and Justice Committee and the Education Committee," as noted by Representative Adilson Rossi (PSB) at the 10/21/2015 hearing in Campinas²⁶. The other two proposals were processed as substitutes, leaving the entities that proposed submitting amendments, which, by the end of the process, were consolidated into agglutinative amendments for a final vote in the Plenary:

In short, we ended up with three PEE projects: one that was being backed by Adusp through PSOL. It was the updated older proposal. The government's Plan with the 23 goals; and the one supported by the PT bench, which was the initial project prepared by the State Forum²⁷.

The public hearings were crucial in mobilizing sectors of society in support of amendments that could improve Bill No. 1,083/2015. From the perspective of the group of entities represented in the other two replacement projects, the goal was to persuade the deputies, who generally favored the government's proposals, to amend the bill.

It is worth noting that at the time, it was often remarked that "the São Paulo government had 79 out of 94 deputies," meaning that 84% of the legislators were aligned with the government. As a result, virtually nothing happened in the House without the Executive's approval. The Executive rules the House²⁸.

Given this situation, as state deputy Carlos Giannazi (PSOL)²⁹ stated during the first public hearing, these hearings would be essential to improving the government's proposal:

²⁶ Own transcription available in a restricted repository.

²⁷ Paulo Filho in an interview given on 10/31/2022, available in a restricted repository.

²⁸ César Augusto Minto, in an interview on 10/13/2022, available in a restricted repository.

²⁹ Socialism and Freedom Party.

We would like to perfect, improve, and incorporate our proposals, which is still possible through the agglutinative amendment at the final stage of approval, because we believe, first and foremost, that an education plan must be constructed collectively. It is not a government plan; it must be a society's plan for education. There was no debate, no participation; this is not a government plan. We can no longer have an education plan from PSDB, PT, or PMDB. We need a plan for society, built collectively—that's what it's all about [...]³⁰.

Despite some limitations on civil society participation, the education plan proposal developed by the Forum represented a State policy, which emerged from the clash between different ideological positions, unlike the government's Bill No. 1,083/2015.

Professor Bebel was present in the six public hearings coordinated by the Alesp's Education and Culture Commission, representing Apeoesp and the Forum's proposal; Professor João Palma, also representing the Forum's proposal; a representative of substitute No. 1, or Bill 1,035/2015; a representative from Seduc and representatives from student entities. Only in the last hearing, the one held at Alesp, the Seduc representative was the secretary of education, Professor Herman Voorwald. The hearing was attended by state deputies, councilors, and representatives from various groups, including the interested public.

Despite Seduc's explanations regarding its methods and the content of Bill No. 1.083/2015, there was criticism from many participants. A key concern raised by representatives was the issue of financing, particularly Goal 20 of the government's proposal, which simply mirrored what was outlined in the PNE for 2014-2024.

In other words, the government's failure to specify what percentage of São Paulo's GDP would be allocated to education during the decade was perceived as a risk to the achievement of other important goals, such as those linked to expanding access to education and improving teaching quality, both of which require better working conditions for education professionals.

At the seminar held by the Alesp's Education and Culture Commission on September 8, 2015, and in subsequent public hearings, it became clear that the government's proposal and that of the Forum were structurally similar, both in structure and in content. In César Minto's³¹ assessment, some organizations were "closer to the second substitute of PL 1,083/2015 from

³⁰ Own transcription available in a restricted repository.

³¹ Interview given on 10/13/2022, access in restricted repository.

the Executive branch, rather than to ours, the first substitute to the said PL. Professor João Palma echoed this sentiment.

This is justified because the government's proposal was based on the text developed by the Forum, although important points were modified, and three additional goals were included. Professor Herman Voorwald highlighted this during the hearing held at the Legislative Assembly on 10/27/2015:

Well, first, I would like to make it very clear that it wasn't the bureaucrats who drafted this plan. As Professor Palma correctly stated, 75% of the plans, whether submitted by the state government or the Forum, are aligned, and they also align with the national plan³².

Despite the similarities between the Forums text and the one modified by Seduc, as Bebel points out, without a guarantee of funding mechanisms in Goal 20, it will merely remain a declaration of intent. "I don't even claim that the plan presented by the secretary is 75% aligned, because if Goal 20 is not set, it isn't 75%, it's just a collection of declarations."³³

Based on the understanding expressed by Professor João Palma, coordinator of the Forum, during a meeting on 10/20/2015, FEE-SP approved a text with 14 points of disagreement with the Executive's proposal³⁴. This is what Professor Palma stated during the hearing in Campinas:

Yesterday, at the State Forum session, we approved a text of 14 points, which represent our disagreements with the Executive's project. We do not completely reject the Executive's project, especially since it originated from the Forum's proposal³⁵.

Deputy Carlos Giannazi, advocating for Substitute No. 1, expanded the scope of issues he deemed necessary to be discussed in the hearings so that the PEE-SP would offer a distinct vision for São Paulo's educational policies over the next decade:

³² Own transcription available in a restricted repository.

³³ Own transcription available in a restricted repository.

³⁴ Own transcript of the 38th meeting of the São Paulo State Education Forum, held on October 20, 2015, and available in a restricted repository.

³⁵ Own transcription available in a restricted repository.

[...] We want to address issues related to the universalization of early childhood education, elementary education, and high school education. We want to discuss higher education in the state of São Paulo, the issue of privatization. We want to debate vocational education, Etecs, and Fatecs. We also want to address the democratic management of state public schools. Above all, we must discuss education funding, which is perhaps the most crucial point in the debate on education plans today. This is the issue of education financing, because without new funding, without an increase in resources, we will not move forward in terms of access and quality of education. The plan that was presented is terrible in this regard. It links education financing to the Fiscal Responsibility Law. There is no progress at all. This plan does not propose any significant increase in investment in public education in the state of São Paulo³⁶.

The understanding expressed by various entities during the public hearings on Strategy 20.4 of Bill No. 1,083/2015, “Progressively allocating resources for the maintenance and development of education, including the remuneration of education professionals, in compliance with the Fiscal Responsibility Law,” is that this conditionality would limit the ability to achieve “Goal 17 – Valuing teachers and educators in public basic education networks to equate their average salaries with those of other professionals with equivalent education levels.” On this subject, Professor Bebel states that “Everything related to funding was met with an, ‘Oh, things have to abide by the Fiscal Responsibility Law.’ Everything... so I said, ‘Folks, this is not... this is not solid, okay? It cannot be taken seriously.’”³⁷

In addition to the insufficiency of public resources for the public sector, what has been referred to as different forms of privatization in education was also under discussion (Adrião, 2018). When addressing programs and projects that directly impact the pedagogical organization of schools, Raul Marcelo criticized the centralization of decisions by Seduc and the fact that it primarily engages with institutes and foundations linked to capital:

Currently, there are institutes and foundations carrying out the pedagogical planning for São Paulo’s education department. [...] They hire these NGOs, these entities, to provide advice, and it’s not cheap. So, the first discussion was this: we argued at the time that this process should be carried out by our [public] universities [...] and also the school community³⁸.

³⁶ Own transcription available in a restricted repository.

³⁷ Interview conducted on 11/30/2022, available in a restricted repository.

³⁸ Interview given on 11/2/2022, available in a restricted repository.

The debate at the hearings revealed that the changes made to the Forum's proposal diluted the PEE-SP, leaving the state lacking clear and necessary parameters to guide educational policies for the decade.

Despite rejecting Substitute No. 2, the government agreed to negotiate changes to Bill No. 1,083/2015: "[...] This discussion took a long time. And every now and then, the government would back down due to pressure from Christians, who were part of the government's base, and we, alongside PSOL at the time, stood our ground."³⁹ However, given the balance of power in Alesp, compromises were also necessary, supported by dialogues with entities, as reported by Deputy Zico: "We also had to concede, 'Look, we can take this deal...', and this was negotiated with the students, Apeoesp, and all interested parties."

It is evident that, although the Forum had a majority of civil society representatives, Seduc's actions concerning the FEE-SP proposal and the government's majority in Alesp allowed for dominance around the government's proposal, with some concessions resulting from the pressure exerted by movements, the actions of Forum entities, and those who withdrew from the process.

New negotiations involving the government, entities, and the Legislative Assembly were held in the first half of 2016, leading to the approval of the PEE-SP in the middle of that year.

Negotiations Between the Government, Entities, and the Legislative Assembly to Approve PEE-SP

The final public hearing, coordinated by Alesp's Education and Culture Commission, took place on 10/27/2015, and Law No. 16,279, which established the São Paulo State Education Plan (PEE-SP), was approved on 7/8/2016. A set of events between November 2015 and June 2016 influenced negotiations between the government, Alesp, and other entities, as well as the final text of the PEE-SP that was approved and sanctioned by the São Paulo government.

³⁹ Interview given on 12/16/2022, available in a restricted repository.

The tension between the government and education workers, particularly teachers and educators who had participated in a 92-day strike in the first half of 2015, was further exacerbated by the proposed school reorganization. This plan involved the closure of nearly one hundred schools and “the transfer of no fewer than one million students from São Paulo’s state public education network, so that the schools could be split by cycle,” as reported on the cover of the Cotidiano segment of Folha de S. Paulo on 9/23/2015 (Campos et al., 2016, p. 27). The proposal had not been discussed with school communities, particularly students and their families, who only learned about it through the press.

The news was met with widespread criticism from both the school and academic communities. Education professionals, students, and family members expressed their opposition to the reorganization, and students initiated a school occupation movement that dominated mainstream news in the following months, ultimately leading to the dismissal of then-Secretary of Education Professor Herman Voorwald and the suspension of the reorganization by the Public Ministry of São Paulo.

In early 2016, allegations of a fraud scheme involving lunch contracts in city halls and the state government became public, implicating Alesp deputies. The São Paulo government and Seduc faced moments of turbulence.

To replace Professor Herman Voorwald, a retired judge from the São Paulo State Court of Justice, magistrate José Renato Nalini, was appointed with the task of appeasing the state’s education network. Reflecting on his appointment as Secretary of Education, Nalini stated, “[...] in fact, what they wanted was for me to alleviate the crisis and vacate the occupied schools.”⁴⁰

The change in secretary brought about shifts in Seduc’s relationship with union entities, particularly Apeoesp, leading to negotiations that modified Bill No. 1,083/2015.

The public hearings had indicated the need for the government to negotiate changes to Bill No. 1,083/2015 with various entities, and Apeoesp played a key role in this process. However, the Forum continued its operations through its coordinator, Professor João Palma,

⁴⁰ Interview given on 1/12/2020 for the research titled “Educational Policy in the State Education Network of São Paulo (1995-2018),” available in a restricted repository.

who, by the time of the PEE-SP's approval, had already become an advisor to Apeoesp's presidency.

According to Wilson Levy⁴¹, Seduc tried to establish dialogue with the education network and union entities during Secretary Nalini's tenure, despite acknowledging the inability to meet salary demands due to the country's and the state's economic situation⁴².

The approach taken by the new Secretary of Education facilitated more cordial relations with trade unions and helped advance negotiations, unlocking progress on the PEE-SP agenda⁴³.

While the process allowed for modifications to Bill No. 1,083/2015 through amendments drawn from the two education plan proposals that were processed in Alesp as Substitutes 1 and 2, the absence of the USP Teachers' Association (Associação de Docentes da Universidade de São Paulo, Adusp), Centro Paula Souza Workers' Union, and student representatives in the negotiation meetings limited democratic participation. As a result, the Forum's proposals were prioritized at the expense of Substitute No. 1. known as the Sociedade Paulista Proposal. This outcome is also explained by the fact that the government's proposal was more closely aligned with the one drafted by the Forum.

For Raul Marcelo, the approved law fell short of meeting the state's educational needs: "For those who lacked everything, today we have at least something to hold the state government accountable for. The expansion of daycare centers and the fight against illiteracy."⁴⁴ In contrast, Professor Bebel believes that the hearings and negotiations with Seduc and Alesp during the first half of 2016 marked a significant victory for the plan proposed by the Forum: "[...] I think we achieved everything."⁴⁵

Deputy José Zico Prado's assessment of the legislative process and the approved law seems to fall between the views of Deputy Raul Marcelo and Professor Bebel. He acknowledges that there was progress compared to the government's initial proposal but admits that they were

⁴¹ In December 2022, when the interview was conducted, Wilson Levy worked as an advisor in the office of state deputy Maria Izabel Azevedo Noronha. Professor Bebel was elected as a deputy in 2018 and re-elected in 2022.

⁴² Interview given by Wilson Levy da Silva Neto on 12/09/2022, available in a restricted repository.

⁴³ According to Noronha, in an interview on 11/30/2022, accessed in a restricted repository.

⁴⁴ Interview given on 11/02/2022, available in a restricted repository.

⁴⁵ Interview conducted on 11/30/2022, accessed in a restricted repository.

unable to pass important points, as the balance of power in the Alesp plenary was not favorable to Substitutes 1 and 2, nor to the amendments arising from them.

César Minto, from Adusp, shares a more critical perspective, arguing that the result fell short of the state's educational needs and expressing concern about the possibility of the plan's goals not being met due to a lack of implementation. "It fell far short of what it could have achieved. And yet, I think it could turn into a piece of fiction, because the Executive is not at all concerned with making the PEE a reality."⁴⁶

The approval of the PEE-SP took place at the 83rd Ordinary Session, held on 6/14/2016, with Jooji Hato, Carlos Cezar⁴⁷, Fernando Capez, Carlão Pignatari, Célia Leão, and Maria Lúcia Amary presiding, and secretaries Carlos Cezar, Cauê Macris, Carlão Pignatari, Igor Soares, and Wellington Moura.

Several issues that had been debated in the public hearings resurfaced during the session that approved Law No. 16,279/2016, particularly raised by PSOL deputies Carlos Giannazi and Raul Marcelo⁴⁸, as they argued that significant issues from Substitute No. 2 had not been addressed in the proposed text of the agglutinative amendments. Members of the school community were present, as noted by Deputy Carlos Giannazi: "[...] Here, I see students, education workers, teachers fighting, monitoring the approval of the State Education Plan."⁴⁹

Based on the documents analyzed and the interviews conducted, it is understood that there was an expectation among entities, the school community, teaching staff, and students that the PEE would be approved with the inclusion of amendments from the two substitute bills. However, this occurred only in a very partial manner.

The vote in the plenary was not unanimous, but political society forged a consensus through negotiations in the first half of 2016, leading to the approval of the PEE with a large majority of parliamentarians, as well as the agreement of unions, academic entities, and portions of the teaching profession and students.

⁴⁶Interview given on 10/13/2022, access in restricted repository.

⁴⁷ In addition to serving as secretary, Carlos Cezar also assumed the presidency during the session.

⁴⁸ Deputy João Paulo Rillo joined PSOL on 3/24/2018; During the processing and approval of the PEE-SP, he was a member of the PT bench.

⁴⁹ Own transcript of the 83rd Ordinary Session of Alesp, held on June 14, 2016, available in a restricted repository.

Considering that the government had a sufficient base in Alesp to pass its proposal, Bill No. 1,083/2015—which included some aspects developed by FEE-SP, though the approved text differed in certain areas from the executive’s proposal—we can conclude that the existence of the Forum tasked with preparing the PEE in a democratic and participatory manner was not, in this case, sufficient to produce a consensus bill. Public hearings and the mobilization of students and education professionals were essential, as César Minto⁵⁰ points out, highlighting the importance of the mobilizations: “took place during the public hearings. In some of them, the medium-sized plenary sessions [...] of Alesp were full. At least one, on October 27, 2015, where the PEE was discussed, saw the larger Alesp plenary completely overcrowded.”

Thus, the rejection of the government’s PEE proposal *ipsis litteris* resulted from the action of civil society sectors, particularly the academic and school communities, indicating that organization and mobilization remain crucial factors in advocating for educational projects aligned with the interests and needs of marginalized classes.

Final Considerations

The absence of an education plan for the state of São Paulo during the first decade of the 2000s can be understood as a deliberate policy by the São Paulo government, which prioritized the implementation of educational programs and projects aligned with managerialism in public administration and neoliberal rationality, without the involvement of civil society sectors linked to movements advocating for the right to education and public schools.

In that decade, hegemony over educational policy was constructed more through coercive measures, emphasizing the role of political society, rather than building consensus with civil society.

With the approval of the PNE in 2014, it became imperative to develop a state education plan through a participatory and democratic process. The reestablishment of the FEE-SP, driven largely by pressure from civil society organizations, was the solution the São Paulo government used to comply with federal legislation. However, this was done without genuine

⁵⁰ Interview conducted on 10/13/2022, available in a restricted repository.

commitment to a participatory process, as demonstrated by its disregard for the PEE-SP proposal developed by the Forum, in which civil society had actively participated.

An analysis of the process of constructing the São Paulo Education Plan suggests that Seduc had no real interest in engaging in meaningful discussions about the state's educational policy within a Forum that included institutions largely excluded from educational decision-making in the previous two decades, primarily because Seduc's main interlocutors were sectors of civil society tied to capital interests.

As a result, the Forum's initial goal of drafting a proposal for an education plan to be forwarded to Alesp by the government was undermined, leading to the submission of three different education plan proposals were filed to the São Paulo Legislative Assembly. Faced with Seduc's decision to alter the FEE-SP's proposal, civil society representatives were united in criticizing the government's actions, but they were not unified on the issue of remaining in the Forum or submitting a single proposal to Alesp.

Along with other entities, Adusp withdrew from the Forum and explained their reasons for doing so in a public statement, resuming the 2003 Sociedade Paulista education plan proposal after updating it. Meanwhile, Apeoesp, together with most entities involved at the time, remained in the Forum, and submitted the proposal discussed and agreed upon within that body. This split weakened the progressive sectors to some extent in their efforts to advocate for an education plan with goals that were more aligned with the state's educational needs and to ensure that the right to education was connected to the educational conceptions and policies developed in the 1980s and 1990s and which had guided the debates and political-ideological struggles during the drafting of the 1988 Constitution, the 1996 Law of Guidelines and Bases for Education (LDB), and the 2001-2010 National Education Plan (PNE).

Consequently, the state of São Paulo was left devoid a ten-year education plan during the first decade of the 21st century, and little progress was made in educational planning with the 2016-2026 PEE-SP.

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