

Article

“ANOTHER WAY OF TEACHING”: THE FRENCH ‘CLASSES NOUVELLES’ AND THEIR OVERFLOW INTO BRAZIL IN THE 1950S

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes an understanding of the “classes nouvelles”, their circulation and appropriation in Brazilian secondary education in the 1950s. Idealized and implemented by Gustave Monod in French secondary education, from 1945 onwards, the “classes nouvelles” established an innovative school culture based on New Education. This pedagogical experience circulated in state of São Paulo thanks to Luis Contier who, after an internship in France, implemented it at a São Paulo school where he worked. The Contier experience, known as experimental secondary classes, instigated the Brazilian Ministry of Education and Culture to create legislation, in 1958, that allowed the introduction of these classes in Brazilian schools. This work is thought from concepts of the new cultural history and is carried out with sources written in French and Portuguese.

Keywords: *Classes nouvelles*. Pedagogical innovation. Secondary education.

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"UNE AUTRE MANIÈRE D'ENSEIGNER": AS CLASSES NOUVELLES FRANCESAS E SEU TRANSBORDAMENTO NO BRASIL NOS ANOS 1950

RESUMO

O presente artigo se propõe a compreender as *classes nouvelles* e sua circulação e apropriação no ensino secundário brasileiro nos anos de 1950. Idealizadas e colocadas em marcha por Gustave Monod no ensino secundário francês, a partir de 1945, as *classes nouvelles* estabeleceram uma cultura escolar inovadora fundamentada na Educação Nova. Essa experiência pedagógica circulou no estado de São Paulo, por obra de Luis Contier, que, após estagiar na França, passou a aplicá-la na escola onde trabalhava. O ensaio de Contier, conhecido como classes secundárias experimentais, instigou o MEC a criar uma legislação, em 1958, que permitia a introdução dessas classes nos colégios brasileiros. Este trabalho é pensado a partir de conceitos da nova história cultural e é realizado com fontes escritas em língua francesa e portuguesa.

Palavras-chave: *Classes nouvelles*. Inovação pedagógica. Ensino secundário.

"UNE AUTRE MANIÈRE D'ENSEIGNER": LAS CLASSES NOUVELLES FRANCESAS Y SU DESBORDAMIENTO EN BRASIL EN LOS AÑOS DE 1950

RESUMEN

Este artículo se propone comprender las *classes nouvelles* y su circulación y apropiación en la educación secundaria brasileña en los años de 1950. Concebidas y puestas en marcha por Gustave Monod en la educación secundaria francesa, a partir de 1945, las *classes nouvelles* establecieron una cultura escolar innovadora basada en la Educación Nueva. Esta experiencia pedagógica circuló en el estado de São Paulo a través de Luis Contier, quien, luego de una estancia en Francia, comenzó a aplicarla en la escuela de São Paulo donde trabajaba. El ensayo de Contier, conocido como clases secundarias experimentales, instigó al MEC a crear una legislación, en 1958, que permitió la introducción de estas clases en las escuelas brasileñas. Este trabajo está pensado a partir de conceptos de la nueva historia cultural y es realizado con fuentes escritas en francés y portugués.

Palabras clave: *Classes nouvelles*. Innovación pedagógica. Enseñanza secundaria.

"UNE AUTRE MANIÈRE D'ENSEIGNER" : LES CLASSES NOUVELLES FRANÇAISES ET LEUR DÉBORDEMENT AU BRÉSIL DANS LES ANNÉES 1950

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article propose de comprendre les classes nouvelles et leur circulation et appropriation dans l'enseignement secondaire brésilien des années 1950. Conçues et mises en marche par Gustave Monod dans l'enseignement secondaire français, à partir de 1945, les classes nouvelles instaurent une culture scolaire innovante fondée sur l'Éducation nouvelle. Cette expérience pédagogique a circulé dans l'État de São Paulo grâce à Luis Contier qui, après un stage en France, a commencé à l'appliquer à l'école de São Paulo où il travaillait. L'essai de Contier, connu sous le nom de classes secondaires expérimentales, a incité le MEC à créer une législation, en 1958, qui a permis l'introduction de ces classes dans les écoles brésiliennes. Ce travail est pensé à partir de concepts de la nouvelle histoire culturelle et réalisé avec des sources écrites en français et en portugais.

Mots-clés: *Classes nouvelles*. Innovation pédagogique. Enseignement secondaire.

The *classes nouvelles*, after they were established in France in the immediate aftermath of World War II, contributed to encourage a renewal wave in Brazilian secondary education. These classes were conceived and instituted under the leadership of Gustave Monod when he was director of secondary education, a post linked to the French Ministry of National Education. In fact, the *classes nouvelles* were the culmination of a renewal process of French secondary education that took place during the first half of the twentieth century, in which Monod participated in different ways. This educational renewal was linked to the New Education Movement that spread throughout the European continent from various pedagogic matrices, but was affected by political events such as the two world wars and the government of the *Front Populaire* in France in the 1930s – a front formed by left-wing political parties. Monod's rich professional trajectory allows us to understand the educational processes occurred in France in the context of Europe and the Western world.

Firstly, it must be said that Gustave Monod graduated in Philosophy, having passed in mid-1912 the *agrégation* examination and becoming an *agrégé* in Philosophy. In France, this contest was held for admission to high school and some faculties, conferring professional distinction. However, from 1911 on he worked as a teacher of philosophy at École des Roches, a private and secular boarding school for male adolescents located in Normandy that had been founded in 1899 by the sociologist Edmond Demolins. Inspired by the English schools of Abbotsholme and Bedales, École des Roches became one of the main references in the experiences of the New Education in France in the first half of the twentieth century (Araújo; Dallabrida, 2017). In 1914, Monod ceased teaching to join the French troops in World War I and only left the trenches in March 1918 because he was seriously wounded. Strongly marked by the experience of war, in the 1920s, Monod became involved with pacifist associations such as the League of Nations, and created a branch of that institution and a School of Peace; he also joined the Watchfulness Committee of Antifascist Intellectuals (Lecoq; Liderlé, 2009). As a citizen and educator linked to the New Education Movement, he closed political ranks to avoid a new war.

In 1919, he returned to teaching philosophy in public schools in several French cities and joined the association *Compagnons de l'Université Nouvelle*, formed by young university students who had been together in the trenches during World War I, and whose manifesto defended the advancement of the democratization of education proposing measures such as free secondary education and compulsory schooling up to the age of 14. When the *Front Populaire* came to power in France in May 1936, social and educational reforms were fostered in the country. In the field of education, these reforms were made explicit at the Congress of Le Havre, held from May 31 to June 4, 1936, in which Monod participated. The guidelines presented for secondary education in this important meeting are as follows: classes with 25 students, introduction of manual labor, integration of subjects, creation of experimental schools, and pedagogic renewal of the national system of teaching. Soon after the Congress of Le Havre, Monod was appointed as inspector of the Academy of Paris, a position that gave

him power over the pedagogic and administrative dimensions of French secondary education (Lecoq; Liderlé, 2009).

On October 9, 1936, the Minister of National Education of the *Front Populaire* government, Jan Zay, made official schooling mandatory until the age of 14, accepting the proposition of the *Compagnons de l'Université Nouvelle*. The following year, he appointed Monod as deputy director of secondary education, and in this capacity he coordinated the creation of the *classes d'orientation*, an innovative experiment in secondary education that was carried out in the 1937-8 school year and was marked by the implementation of educational orientation, which did not intend to provide professional orientation, but to probe students' aptitudes, which was made possible by reducing the number of students per class to a maximum of 25, by the use of active methods, by the introduction of the class council to make collective work of teachers possible, and by a closer contact between the school and the students' families. The Second World War aborted the nascent essay of the *classes d'orientation* and removed Monod from his administrative role in the direction of secondary education because he opposed the anti-Semitic laws of 1940 published by the Vichy government. Thus, Monod returned to work as a philosophy teacher in schools in the Paris region (Lecoq; Liderlé, 2009).

During the war, Monod was an active member of several associations of the French resistance and, in particular, was a member of the Commission for the Reform of Education, created on November 8, 1944, which was presided by the physicist Paul Langevin and, after his death in December 1946, by Henri Wallon. On January 1, 1945, the Minister of Education of the provisional government of France, René Capitant, appointed Monod as director of secondary education, who created a pedagogic support team consisting of Alfred Weiler, Roger Gal, Georges Petit, and Claire Roby (Cros, 1981). That same year, he founded the *Centre international d'études pédagogiques* (CIEP) in Sèvres and instituted the *classes nouvelles* in secondary education, which were umbilically connected initiatives. The *classes nouvelles* were implemented in the 1945-6 school year in the first year of the first cycle of secondary education (*sixième*) and¹, progressively, in the other years of this cycle and in the years of the second cycle (Cros, 1981). They constituted the continuity and expansion of the *classes d'orientation*, whose principles were announced by the *Compagnons de l'Université Nouvelle*.

In this sense, the present work aims to understand the movement of the French *classes nouvelles* and its circulation and use in Brazilian secondary education in the 1950s. This movement was based on the principles of curricular organization prescribed by the Ministry of National Education, and became a practice in high schools, being evaluated and reinvented in the teachers' internships at the CIEP. To this end, it is considered that pedagogic models are built in singular historical places and moments, are put into circulation in different supports and by different social actors, and are used in educational institutions (Carvalho, 2003). The production of a pedagogic model is based on other pedagogic ideas and educational

¹ In France, secondary education was and still is made up of two cycles: the *collège*, consisting of four classes/school years (*sixième*, *cinquième*, *quatrième* and *troisième*) and the *lycée*, consisting of three classes/school years (*seconde*, *première* and *terminal*) (Araújo; Dallabrida, 2017).

experiences and defines curricular prescriptions. Its circulation involves the dissemination of texts, the creation of occasions, and the mobility of people. This historical inquiry is based on sources written in French and Portuguese reunited in collections in France and the state of São Paulo, such as the legislation on the *classes nouvelles* and records of Brazilian educators, particularly those of Luis Contier. Finally, the text is divided into two sections: firstly, the movement of the *classes nouvelles* is presented; subsequently, it seeks to study its circulation and appropriation in Brazilian secondary education.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE CLASSES NOUVELLES

The pedagogical proposal of the *classes nouvelles* had a prescription of the principles of organization of the school culture of the first cycle of secondary education outlined by the Board of Secondary Education of the French Ministry of National Education which, in the light of the practice in the schools, was progressively reinvented. Initially, it should be mentioned the constitution of classes with up to 25 students, in contrast to the mass classes of "traditional" secondary education. This reduction of students per class had the purpose of making teaching more active and, above all, more individualized, as well as enabling psychopedagogic observation in school life, aiming at the implementation of educational orientation in secondary education (Savoye, 2010). For the years of the first cycle of secondary education there was also a determination to reduce the number of teachers, so that a teacher would take on related subjects such as Natural Sciences and Mathematics, or a teacher from the area of History/Geography would also teach subjects in the area of letters. This strategy of a multi-purpose teacher aimed at a greater rapprochement between teachers and students, which would enable a more effective observation of the students, as well as the articulation of the different subjects (Principes..., 1950). In this way, the transition from primary education, in which there was a single teacher, to secondary education taught by several teachers became less abrupt and more effective.

In the proposal of the *classes nouvelles*, a division of time was initially established between the morning shift, dedicated to the subjects of the official curriculum, and that of the afternoon, focused on physical, manual and artistic activities (Cabinet du Directeur, 1945). The full-time timetable of the first year of the first cycle of secondary education for the 1945-46 school year indicated that in the morning the subjects French, Civic and Moral Instruction, History/Geography, Living Language, Mathematics, and Observational Sciences would be taught; in the afternoon, the activities of Physical Education, Drawing, Environmental Studies, Music Education and one option in artistic activities, manual activities, and Latin should be put into practice (Savoye, 2010). However, these subjects and school activities should be coordinated by the class council, made up of all the teachers in each class, with a head who had pedagogic and administrative responsibilities. In the first two years of the first cycle of secondary education, the class council would meet every week, but in the other two years,

when the new school culture was already incorporated, the teachers' meetings took place at fortnightly intervals (1er Bureau, 1948).

As part of the New Education Movement, the *classes nouvelles* had official instructions to use active methods such as working with the centers of interest, the study of the environment, and directed work. Initially, Gustave Monod appropriated the method of the centers of interest developed by the Belgian educator Ovide Decroly, which encouraged students to explore their interests for their school studies, contributing to the individualization of teaching. In this sense, directed work in small groups also took an important step in the materialization of student activism, giving autonomy to students in their school educational action (Cabinet du Directeur, 1945). However, the study of the natural and human environment was the curricular strategy that sought to integrate all subjects and the one that best represented the *classes nouvelles*. The study of the natural environment provided a direct contact with the flora and fauna, developing greatly in the students a knowledge about the so-called Observational Sciences. The study of the human environment seeks to insert the students in different human institutions, bringing them closer to their socio-economic-cultural reality. This contact with close nature and society - not closed in themselves, but in connection with France, Europe, and the world - was in tune with the purpose of creating in the students an awareness of social solidarity (Savoye, 2010). For Goblot (1950), directed work was effectively incorporated into the implementation of the *quatrième* and *troisième* classes, contributing to the individualization of teaching.

The *classes nouvelles* project also envisaged a closer rapprochement between school and family, which would be made possible through regular meetings of principals and teachers with the students' fathers and mothers. In the light of reports from the Board of Education on a survey carried out about the *classes nouvelles* during the first cycle of secondary education (1945-9), the Board of Secondary Education states that "the first objective of the *classes nouvelles* was to help families with the task of educational orientation, that is, in the choice of the branch of studies capable of bringing about the maximum development for each child"² (our translation) (Notes..., 1949, p. 97). This statement clearly shows that the strengthening of relations between the school and the families of its students was part of the focus of the *classes nouvelles* with the educational orientation of their students, including personal assistance. However, this relationship between educators and family members was also enhanced through gatherings for the exhibition of students' works, as well as through small parties during the year, particularly at Christmas and at the end of the school year (Notes..., 1949). In this process, one must consider the willingness of the students' parents and teachers in relation to the *classes nouvelles* project, both motivated by school innovation.

In the school culture of the *classes nouvelles*, the prescription of educational orientation, made possible by the continuous observation of students, was established as a background for

² "Le premier but des classes nouvelles était d'aider les familles dans la tâche de l'orientation scolaire, c'est-à-dire dans le choix de la branche d'études capables de provoquer le développement maximum de chaque enfant".

pedagogic innovations. In other words, the reduction in the number of students and teachers in the classes, the institution of the class council, the possibility of subject options, and the use of active and individualizing methods, as well as the rapprochement between school and family, contributed to a better psychopedagogic observation of students (Savoye, 2010). In 1950, the creator of the *classes nouvelles* noted that

Educational orientation is the order of the day. There is no education reform project that does not give it space. When the Langevin Commission sought to establish the structure of secondary education, it struggled with the problem of educational orientation and, to a large extent, in order to solve it, it requested the organization of the *classes nouvelles* (Monod, 1981, p. 58, our translation).³

The question of educational orientation in France had been raised since the interwar period due to the growth of secondary education, which was no longer directed to the elites, but began to welcome more and more fractions of the middle classes. Gustave Monod confesses that he developed social sensitivity during the First World War, when he served as a second-class soldier and lived with humble soldiers with little schooling, and envisaged that, in the perspective of a republican and secular education, everyone could develop according to his/her interests and needs (Lecoq; Liderlé, 2009). According to Cros (1981, p. 3), as a public secondary school teacher, Monod was "the first to sense the 'school explosion'", that would take place more explicitly in the French education system from the second half of the 1950s onwards. In this way, in the government of the *Front Populaire*, Monod led the implementation of the *classes d'orientation* which were an essay, though short-lived, in the sense of instilling educational orientation in the school culture in the *classe de sixième*.

In the *classes nouvelles*, the educational orientation crosses their entire pedagogic proposal for the first cycle of secondary education, which had two well-marked moments. On the one hand, the first two years – *sixième* and *cinquième* – formed the observation cycle in which students were followed with pedagogic attention in their participation in compulsory subjects and optional activities by the educational team formed by teachers and a school psychologist. Based on reports on a survey carried out about the *classes nouvelles* during the first cycle of secondary education (1945-9), the Board of Secondary Education notes that "the psychological observation of students, whether in the intuitive form made by the teachers, or in the scientific form of [psychological] tests carried out by the work of school psychologists or professional counselors, proved to be very useful in this process" (our translation) (NOTES..., 1949, p. 98). The work of observation of each student was made possible by the reduction in the number of students and teachers per class, the existence of two daily shifts, and the use of personalized methods and group work, as well as the strengthening of relationships between teachers and students' parents. On the other hand, "after this cycle, in the 4th and

3 "L'orientation scolaire est à l'ordre du jour. Il n'est pas de projet de réforme de l'enseignement qui ne lui fasse sa place. Lorsque la Commission Langevin a cherché à établir la structure de l'Enseignement du Second degré, elle s'est heurtée au problème de l'orientation et c'est en grande partie pour le résoudre qu'elle a demandé l'organisation des classes nouvelles".

3rd years, based on the options indicated by the [psychological] test bank and observation of the student, a specialized curriculum was offered, allowing the student several options: scientific, industrial technique, economics, languages, music, arts" (Vieira, 2020, p. 62). The educational orientation practiced in the *classes nouvelles*, therefore, had the purpose of probing the interests and aptitudes of each student.

On the basis of these pedagogic prescriptions, the *classes nouvelles* were gradually implemented in the first cycle of French secondary education, so that in the 1945-6 school year there were 200 *sixième* classes in 150 schools located in 40 cities; in the following year *cinquième* classes were set in motion and so on... It was a restricted essay in the whole of French secondary education, which, in the second half of the 1950s, was very dynamic due to the creative uses that teachers made of the official prescription of the *classes nouvelles*. These singular essays were socialized in *Classes Nouvelles* journal, created by the Association Nationale des Édicateurs des Classes Nouvelles de L'enseignement du Second Degré (ANECNES), which circulated from July 15, 1947 to July 10, 1948 (Vieira, 2020). Thus, due to its pedagogic openness and constant revision, this innovative essay in French secondary education has been called the "movement of the *classes nouvelles*" (CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ÉTUDES PÉDAGOGIQUES, 1996, p. 87).

However, the *classes nouvelles* were abolished in 1952 by the Board of Secondary Education of the Ministry of National Education due to the large growth of students in the French public-school system following the post-war baby boom, for there was an estimate that the number of secondary school students in 1956 would be approximately doubled. In this way, in order to balance the budget of secondary education, the *classes nouvelles* were discontinued, but the pedagogical renewal at this level of schooling would be continued by the so-called *classes-pilotes*, which were implemented in the *rentrée* of 1952. In comparison to the *classes nouvelles*, the *classes-pilotes* were smaller in number, being established at each Regional Pedagogic Center, as well as at the experimental school of the CIEP (Cabinet du Directeur, 1952).

In addition, although the teachers of the *classes nouvelles* were volunteers, which showed openness to pedagogic innovation, Monod was concerned about their teacher training. For this reason, together with the institution of the *classes nouvelles*, he created, on June 30, 1945, the Centre international d'études pédagogiques (CIEP), which was subsequently directed by Professor Edmée Hatinguais, with the aim of promoting teacher training internships for the *classes nouvelles* (CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ÉTUDES PÉDAGOGIQUES, 1996). The first internship started before the beginning of the 1945-6 school year, but later the heads of the teaching teams of the *classes nouvelles* were regularly assembled, sometimes to plan their school activities and sometimes to evaluate them. Nevertheless, as it is inscribed in its name, the CIEP had an international dimension because it proposed to be a space for the exchange of experiences between French and foreign educators, and hosted meetings of UNESCO, which was also created in 1945 and based in Paris. Thus, several teachers and principals of Brazilian public secondary schools carried out internships at the CIEP on the *classes nouvelles*.

In traditional French secondary education, the *classes nouvelles* have become, as Cros (1981) shrewdly stated, "une autre manière d'enseigner" – another way of teaching – marked by the reduction in the number of students and teachers in classes, full-time schooling with the use of active methods, collective teaching work, and, finally, by the practice of educational orientation.

CIRCULATION AND APPROPRIATION OF THE CLASSES NOUVELLES IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO

The CIEP played a fundamental role in the circulation of the matrix of the *classes nouvelles* because, through the internships of educators promoted in this center, the assumptions of this matrix were consolidated and circulated widely. Being configured as a training organ and constituting as headquarters for the debate on the experience of the *classes nouvelles*, the CIEP became a landmark due to its actions to promote departmental internships for French teachers, in France or abroad, as well as events to share information about the problems of teaching and education that were being held at the time. Under the aegis of UNESCO or the Conseil de l'Europe, major international internships were carried out by the CIEP, seeking a wider understanding of the international educational context (CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ÉTUDES PÉDAGOGIQUES, 1950). Through the actions of this center, the model developed and used in the *classes nouvelles* was put into wide circulation, having been largely appropriated, as its entry into Brazil exemplifies.

The internships of French educators were organized by school inspectors and technical pedagogic advisors and were a great success, so that the teachers of the first *classes nouvelles* began to return to Sèvres to take stock of the experiences of the years that followed – 5^{ème}, 4^{ème} and then 3^{ème}. Crediting the accomplishment of the reform to the educators, the meetings at the Center allowed the educators already integrated into the proposal to contact the newcomers, enabling them to discuss the results achieved and the advantage of the desired lessons: "Without this direct contact, many enthusiasms would have been extinguished, many of the fruitful experiences would not have been transmitted" (CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ÉTUDES PÉDAGOGIQUES, 1950, p. 2, our translation).⁴

The CIEP provided professionals with a fruitful space for discussions and evaluations of the work carried out, so that, under debate and in a favorable atmosphere of pedagogic freedom and creativity, they could advance in the experience with a view to its constant progress. Thus, according to Contier, "as the results were obtained, the essays were adjusted to fit and integrate the general education system" (1981, p. 1). As a result of the success of the internships, the CIEP was consolidated as a space destined to receive French and foreign educators and to inform them of the problems of quality of teaching, and even after the end

⁴ "Sans ce contact direct, bien des enthousiasmes se seraient éteints, bien des expériences fructueuses n'auraient pu se transmettre".

of the experience of these classes in the French territory it continued to present itself as a space for the circulation of its pedagogic assumptions.

The CIEP also operated a pilot school where educational experiments were carried out and whose classes were open to visitors. In addition, the services of a directorate of studies, educational research, and pedagogic office were offered with internship opportunities for French and foreigners, giving institutional support for the relations with foreign countries, documentation and library services. The CIEP also hosted the Centre de recherches pour l'enseignement de la civilisation (CREC), where French professors conducted corporate training and courses under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Conseil de l'Europe (CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ÉTUDES PÉDAGOGIQUES, 1950; Araújo; Dallabrida, 2017).

The wide circulation of ideas promoted by the CIEP is evident. In the sources analyzed, it was observed the presence of several theorists from the most different countries, many of them considered members of the New School Movement, such as Helen Parkhurst with the Dalton Plan, Montessori, Decroly and Piaget, and still others, such as Kees Boeke, with his sociocratic method, and Tagore, from the New Shantiniketan School. It is interesting to note that these intellectuals and the theories they had created are referenced not in the form of static, distant, abstract, and difficult to understand theories, but from the experience of the educators who mobilized them. It is worth mentioning here that the objective of the CIEP was to mobilize knowledge in order to broaden horizons and break the isolation of school theories and experiences. A format that could go beyond "codified training" was sought in order to enable the personal contributions of these educators so that the meetings would constitute opportunities for contact and enrichment (CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ÉTUDES PÉDAGOGIQUES, 1950).

In the national and regional internships, the necessary adjustments to the *classes nouvelles* were also thought out and planned, enabling their monitoring and evaluation, as well as conducting research on the teaching practices promoted and carried out through the actions of the CIEP. This organization eventually established a form of collaborative supervision and administration of the reform, since it complemented these processes through a self-organization of knowledge and practices. It is important to emphasize that a large number of educators were given the opportunity to experience long stages of *rapprochement* with this French essay of renewal, so that this circulation became one of the main gateways of the matrix in the Brazilian territory.

The importance given to the exchange of experiences led to the creation of journals, such as *Dossiers pédagogiques pour l'enseignement du second degré*, with the first issue published in December 1945, and *Les Cahiers pour l'enseignement du second degré*, in 1949. Due to the overall experience, the enthusiasm it aroused, the pedagogic reflection on French secondary education that it generated, and the collective transformation it caused, the experience was called "*mouvement des classes nouvelles*" (Savoye, 2010). The publication and circulation of these journals as well as others created throughout history for the circulation of the movement

promoted the diffusion of the pedagogic ideas expressed in them, allowed rapprochements, and strengthened them. Contier had in his personal collection several copies of journals of worldwide circulation, especially French, which dealt with the New Education Movement and the active methodology, as well as the spread of the *classes nouvelles*. In this sense, its creation is understood as a strategy for the diffusion of a movement, not only of the *classes nouvelles*, but also, and above all, of the New Education and the assumptions advocated by them, that is, as a strategy of propaganda about this cause and search for supporters (CARVALHO, 2007). In the same sense, the internships of educators have also become a central tool for the circulation and dissemination of the matrix of the *classes nouvelles*, constituting what Carvalho (2007) calls an instrument of internal articulation of the movement. Therefore, based on these strategies of dissemination and circulation, the appropriation of the pedagogic experience outside its country of origin was achieved, with Brazil being one of the countries strongly inserted in this process.

Inserted in the circulation route of the pedagogic matrix of the *classes nouvelles*, Brazil took part in the exchange with the French research center, sending educators who, upon returning to Brazil, disseminated in this country the assumptions of the French experience. In the specific case of São Paulo, a city that had a significant multiplication of essays of what is conventionally called "experimental classes", a specific educator is a key piece for understanding the first movements of appropriation of the matrix of the *classes nouvelles*: Luis Contier, who served as director of Professor Alberto Conte Institute of Education - a public school located in the neighborhood of Santo Amaro (São Paulo – Brazil) - and, immersed in this debate of transnational dimensions, sought answers to his yearnings for renewal. Contier was part of the first group of Brazilians to do an internship at CIEP (Contier, 1981), remaining at the center for approximately two years, from the beginning of 1950 until the middle of 1951. During this period, he became acquainted with the proposal for the renewal of French secondary education, which, according to him, responded to the governments' quest to adapt educational practices to the post-war reality (Designações para o ensino vocacional, 1965).

Tactical appropriations are a way of manipulating a certain cultural object based on the failures of power surveillance in the situation (Certeau, 2012). Tactic takes place, therefore, in the field of the "other", in the gaps of the current prescriptions, making possible practices that subvert these prescriptions. In this sense, seeing himself hampered both by the legislation of the time, considered here as a *strategy* device, and by the limitations imposed by the scarcity of resources, yet motivated by that experience, Contier tactically initiated, with a bold measure that was contrary to the legislation of the time, the application of active methods at Professor Alberto Conte Institute of Education, taking the first steps towards applying them to teaching (Vieira, 2023).

In this institute of education, within the limits of legislation, he appropriated the structure of the *classes nouvelles* according to Brazilian conditions, requesting full-time shifts for both students and teachers, promoting curricular renewal based on the unfolding of the curriculum in an arrangement composed in part of subjects common to all students, and in part of optional

subjects, which, in his opinion, was unprecedented in the Brazilian educational experience. With this initiative, he sought to advance in the solution of issues pointed out as deficiencies in secondary education, aiming at the reformulation of systems that generated in young people a hatred for studying (Contier, 1981).

At Alberto Conte State Institute, drawing on the assumptions of the *classes nouvelles*, it was proposed a teaching experience that would enable students to effectively understand the contents based on a "rational method of perception", which would replace the mnemonic principles applied until then. To achieve this objective, new pedagogic and orientation principles were organized, which indicated the priority use of active methods, that is, teaching methods centered on the students' activity, so that learning situations could be provided, through which knowledge linked to personal experiences could be acquired, always with the purpose of "preparing them for the struggles of modern life" (Strenger, [1950], p. 3).

The active methodology was, at first, offered on an optional basis to teachers who were willing to adopt the new principles proposed for the institution. In addition, the educator showed concern over the configuration of the situation of the educational environment or the configurations of the educational field and the relations and tensions present in it, which, as in the French educational field, was not always favorable to the unfolding of the experience. In this scenario, Contier began the renewal process, as reported:

In our school, [...] we are gradually introducing the active methods, with some modifications required not only by obedience to the current school legislation, but also by respect for certain realities of our educational environment, with the main objective of providing the student with an acquisition of general knowledge, based on personal experience, in order to prepare him/her for the struggles of modern life. To this end, in the classes whose professors were willing to adopt these principles, we are giving the following orientation: division of students into work teams; study of the human and natural environment, and the creation in the classroom of centers of interest to improve the interplay between the various subjects of the curriculum, with students using mainly the subjects of drawing and handicrafts for illustrations and demonstrations of their advancement (Contier, 1956).

The method was introduced in a moderate way, due to the limitations of the school legislation of the time. In view of this, the exercises of traditional teaching were not immediately abolished, and the so-called pedagogic freedom, in the words of the educator himself, was "limited by common sense". However, the pedagogic principles proved to be innovative and placed the student at the center of the educational work, as recorded by Strenger:

- i) in order to learn, it would be necessary to do and not only listen and memorize, as in the case of children, who prefer to make their own toys;
- ii) students should cease to be a number and become a name in the class;
- iii) students should have their role in the class as the individual has in society;
- iv) students should feel the sensation of personal discovery;
- v) students should use, mainly, the subjects of Drawing and Handicrafts for illustrations and demonstration of their progress;
- vi) it should be done by dividing the class into Work Teams;

- vii) the Study of the Human and Natural Environment should be practiced; and
- viii) Centers of Interest in the class for better interplay between the various subjects of the Curriculum should be instituted (Strenger, [1950], p. 3).

Based on these principles, a different dynamic was promoted for the planning of the classes. Thus, the content should count on the personal contributions of the students, always with a greater focus on aspects that could contribute to the formation of his/her intelligence and character. In addition, the school shift was expanded to full-time, both for students and teachers, which, in itself, represented a very significant advance, especially if we consider the objective of better or greater rapprochement with the student. Contier placed the pillars of his experience in the matrix of the *classes nouvelles*, which, according to him, was based on the theorists John Dewey, Claparède, Jean Piaget, and Maria Montessori. Moreover, theoretically, he placed the activities carried out at Alberto Conte Institute in the methodology of "centers of interest", developed by Ovide Decroly. However, the sources analyzed do not allow us to sufficiently understand the application of the method (Contier, 1956; *Processamento em estabelecimento oficial da capital ensaios sobre aplicação de novos métodos de ensino*, 1956).

As to the organization of the curriculum, changes were made in order to reduce the number of compulsory subjects, unfolding the prescribed curriculum (Contier, 1981). In addition, a system was set up to promote greater initiative on the part of the students with the use of research methodology, teamwork, and study of the environment. The field trip activities, central to the proposal of studying the environment and conducting research processes proposed by this practice, were carried out with the help both of the parents who took the students and Contier, who raised funds for the cost of the activities. In the definition that he had appropriated from the internship and guiding documents of the CIEP, the practice of studying the environment presupposed the students' visits to museums, laboratories, and attendance at cinemas, theaters, concerts, and conferences. For such visits, according to the educator, preparation was carried out by reading newspapers, and at the end of the activity a debate would be held based on the issues that event had arisen (Contier, 1956).

Teamwork was a practice also applied at Alberto Conte Institute of Education. These tasks were organized by dividing the class into groups of students, choosing one leader and one deputy leader per team to conduct the studies. These studies, in turn, had their plan previously defined with the proposed themes, covering the different subjects of the official program. After the work on the contents, the results found were exposed to the students, and the explanation could be made using different strategies, including dramatizations for educational purposes. In this context, the teacher exclusively fulfilled the function of supervising and guiding the educational work, sharing with the students in the classroom the spaces of authority and speech.

The practice of teamwork proved to be effective, obtaining significantly positive results. According to Contier (1956), although more time was required for the activities, a better advancement was achieved, and the transformation of the student's roles from actor to author,

and from listener to speaker, was observed. With a greater encouragement to address the individual's personality and to foster human solidarity, it was observed the development of self-discipline, the elimination of cheating, and the traditional system of grade competition among students.

Although the proposal presented advances, the good application of the active methodology presupposed a reduction in the number of students in the classroom, because in Brazil it was common to form classes with 50 students, while in the French experience of the *classes nouvelles* a maximum of 25 students per class was planned. In view of this, Contier resorted to tactics to reduce the number of students per class, admitting a maximum number of 40, even if the demand for enrollment was high. However, more significant reductions were not possible: "it was 40 because of my resistance. If the law stipulated 50, I admitted 40. The demand was great and I tried to reconcile the interest of the majority and provide a good education" (Contier, 1981, p. 3).

Another focus of the experiment was on the principle of better student orientation. In this sense, it was sought to promote the strengthening of the bond between family and school, and one day a week was dedicated to receive the students' parents. The teachers would talk to their students' parents during class breaks. Another change, of extreme importance, refers to the creation of an 'Educational Orientation Service' in the institution in order to observe and monitor students to probe their aptitudes. In addition, the evaluation process also underwent significant changes, becoming qualitative and relying on the collective analysis of students in class councils, which did not exist in the institution before (Contier, 1981).

The positive results achieved in the experiment after the application of these assumptions attracted attention in the educational and political fields. In this scenario, Contier received, in Santo Amaro city, the visit of authorities interested in the special aspects of the institution's new school culture. Among these authorities was a team of professors from the University of São Paulo (USP), which included Eurípedes dos Simões de Paula, then director of the School of Education, as well as Marina Cintra, Gildásio Amado, and Laerte Ramos de Carvalho.

It is important here to pay due attention to the fact that Luis Contier's influence in the educational field was a factor that favored both the dissemination of the experience at Alberto Conte Institute and the process of making the essay official, which began in the following years. At that time, Contier held prestigious positions in the educational field that authorized his pedagogical practices, such as the position of professor of the teacher training course of the "Course of Specialists in Education for Latin America", linked to the Regional Center for Educational Research of São Paulo, held by Contier between 1956 and 1960. In this strategic role in this center, the educator began to play a central role in the movement of study and dissemination of the New Education project, through teacher training, not only in Brazil, but throughout Latin America.

In 1956 was held the Meeting of Directors of Secondary Education, an event in which, for three days, principals of colleges and normal schools, public and private, divided into eight commissions, dealt with issues related to education and teaching. Among these, the

4th commission, of which Luis Contier was a member, was charged with dealing with the "Renewal of teaching methods and processes. Legal and minimum conditions required for new experiences." In this commission, Contier announced educational principles for the experimental classes, which were, according to him, inspired for the most part by the French experience of the *classes nouvelles*. In the organizational principles suggested by Contier, from 1957 onwards, experimental first-year classes would be created in schools whose principals and teachers were willing to carry out an educational experience, at the discretion of the Ministry of Education. These experiences, in the conception of this educator, should follow some basic premises, as follows:

ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES

- a. the students in the experimental classes would have the right to an adaptation exam in the establishment, if he/she wished to transfer to another school;
- b. the experimental classes would have students whose parents were aware of the situation and gave written authorization for their children to attend them;
- c. the teachers of the experimental classes would have special authorization for this purpose;
- d. the schools carrying out this experiment would be required to submit an annual report to the Ministry of Education and Health on the results obtained;
- e. these schools should offer minimum conditions to ensure the efficiency of school work;
- f. these experimental classes could have no more than forty students;
- g. these colleges could count on permanent assistance not only from the Sectional Inspectorate of São Paulo, but also from all the Schools of Philosophy of the capital of São Paulo;
- h. reduction in the number of teachers in the first years of high school, grouping two related subjects for the same teacher;
- i. creation, in parallel, of internships, seminars, lectures, and conferences for the first teachers of such classes (Contier, 1956, p. 1-2).

Contier added that the experiment should be extended for a period of four years so that the results could be properly assessed, and stressed the importance of including an 'educational orientation office' with the participation of a psychopedagogue, and highlighted the pedagogic function of the principal, who should not be a mere administrator (Criação de classes experimentais [...], 1956; Primeira jornada de diretores, 1957). Contier also discusses what should be the "Guiding Principles" of the experiment. According to him, the experimental classes in Brazil would have, as well as the French *classes nouvelles*, the purpose of educational orientation, that is, to get to know the student better, to better guide him in his/her studies. In this sense, he highlighted the importance of the 'Educational Orientation Sector', whose main functions he defined.

Contier advised that, "with all the pedagogic freedom dictated by common sense" and without the exercises of traditional teaching being systematically abolished, at least in the beginning, the teacher should make use of the "different active methods of modern pedagogy to lead the student to an acquisition of general knowledge on the basis of personal experience in order to prepare him/her for the struggles of modern life" (Contier, 1956, p. 4). In this

sense, he focused on the method to be used in the experimental classes, advocating the use of active methodology:

Use of active methods:

- a) in order to learn, it is necessary to do and not only listen and memorize, as in the case of children, who prefer to make their own toys;
- b) students should cease to be a number and become a name in the class;
- a) students should have their role in the class, as the individual has in society;
- d) students should have the sensation of personal discovery;
- e) students should use mainly the Drawing and Handicrafts courses for illustrations and demonstrations of their progress;
- f) division of the class by the teachers into Work Teams;
- g) Study of the Human and Natural Environment;
- h) institution, in the class, of a Center of Interests for a better interplay between the various subjects of the Curriculum (Contier, 1956, p. 4).

Among the active methods, the educator initially gives prominence to teamwork, also highlighting the practices of the 'study of the environment' and, finally, of the 'centers of interests' (Contier, 1956, p. 6).

Contier makes clear the intention to collaborate in the formulation of legislation for a general plan of educational reform, which, to a certain extent, gives the experimental classes the same importance that the *classes nouvelles* had for the French educational context: an anticipation of the reform of secondary education. It is also interesting to highlight the central role attributed by Contier to educators, when he defended an educational reform that would go from the schools to the ministerial offices and parliamentary commissions, based on the premise that the educators could issue honest opinions aimed at better school performance because they knew and lived the school reality. Contier also shows that he is convinced that the curriculum proposed for the aforementioned educational reform responded to a specific context, not being a proposal or an absolute method in itself and capable of crossing the times, but rather a punctual attempt that, in the context of specific local and global policies, was intended to respond to the yearnings of the educational purposes of that time.

His exposition finds space in the educational field, his work being accepted and praised. In view of the positive repercussion, the report produced was sent by Marina Cintra to Gildásio Amado, then director of secondary education, initiating a movement for official authorization of the essay of the experimental classes. Based on the equivalence regime established by Law No. 1821, of March 12, 1953, Amado justifies that the courses of the Experimental Classes would be equivalent to those of secondary education, the same way the professional courses already were at the time. In this sense, the director assured that the variations in the curriculum would be kept within the limits compatible with the legislation of the time, aiming only to "give the secondary course a more concrete sense of training for the tasks and responsibilities of social and professional life" (Classes Experimentais no Ensino Secundário, 1958, p. 75). In

its explanatory memorandum, it was clarified that the experimental teaching regime would not be determined compulsorily, neither to students, nor to teachers or schools, but would depend on the acceptance of professionals and families. In addition, forms of adaptation for possible transfers would be foreseen, and the rights of equivalence would be safeguarded by the competent authority, in accordance with the structure of the Organic Law of Secondary Education (Decreto-Lei No. 4,244 - of April 9, 1942). Last but not least, it was suggested that the question should be submitted to the National Council of Education (Amado, 1959).

Gildásio Amado's explanatory memorandum was answered by education technician Adalberto Correia Sena, from the secondary education board. In his review, he mentions experiences that ventured into the application of the method of directed studies and promoted changes in the evaluation criteria, considering that these essays were smoothened by the inflexibility of the legal pedagogic organization of the time. Among these, the so-called experimental classes of secondary education stood out, which, according to him, had already been considered in the Organic Law of Secondary Education. However, he considered that it was not essential to wait for the definitive solution, printed under the terms of legislation, to put into practice these "optional and prudently conducted didactic experiences", promoting "modifications that would diversify secondary education, admitting compulsory and optional subjects, in addition to the branching of the first and second cycle courses" (SENA, 1958, p. 78).

In this sense, the document "Instructions on the nature and organization of experimental classes" was published in 1958 in *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*, which deals with the general guidelines for the functioning of these classes. In this document, it is clarified that, with the approval of Reviews No. 31/58 of the National Council of Education and No. 77/58 of the Attorney Counsel of the Ministry, the organization of experimental classes in high school courses was authorized and could be put into practice from the 1959 school year. In this way, the Ministry of Education and Health of Brazil made the experimental secondary classes official in the public education system with a school culture that drew largely on the *classes nouvelles*.

After the experimental classes were made official, several public and private institutions were integrated into the essay in the State of São Paulo, making different appropriations, both of the matrix of the *classes nouvelles* and of other matrices in circulation in the State, such as the matrix of Personalized Pedagogy, by Pierre Faure (Vieira, 2015, 2020; Dallabrida, 2017). Likewise, other Federative Units carried out experimental essays, which became the subject of study, as early as 1963, by Jayme de Abreu and Nádia Cunha, in the publication "Experimental secondary classes: assessment of an experience" (Cunha; Abreu, 1963). In a more recent scenario, experimental secondary classes have been effectively transformed into historical objects with studies that focused on the resonances of these different matrices and their multiple appropriations (Vieira, 2015; Vieira, 2019; Dallabrida, 2023), shedding light on the contributions of these essays to the current educational scenario.

CONCLUSION

The *classes nouvelles* were a significant rupture with pedagogic traditionalism in French secondary education at least since the Napoleonic reforms of the early nineteenth century. They had an essay with the *classes d'orientation* of the 1930s and were effectively implemented in the context of the *Libération* of France from the Nazi occupation, so that it was part of the mechanisms of reconstruction in the immediate post-war period. These classes sprang from the rubble of the war, but their background was the growth of French secondary education, which began to have different sociological profiles, with most students coming from the middle classes, and some miraculously from the lower classes. It is important to underline the innovations in the school culture (re)created with the *classes nouvelles*, starting the study of the natural and human environment, making use of a methodology that has become the pedagogic hallmark in France and other countries. No less important was the reduction in the number of students and teachers per class at the beginning of the first cycle of secondary education, as well as, of course, full-time teaching, directed work, team activities, and collective teaching work in the class council. And the institution of educational orientation that was dominant and carried out through the observation of the students by the teachers and the use of psychological tests, with the objective to personalize student learning.

The proposal of the *classes nouvelles* designed by Monod had a concern over the preparation of their teachers, which was carried out through teacher training internships at the CIEP, a center open to foreign teachers. Since the beginning of the 1950s, Brazilian educators have done internships at the CIEP, including Luis Contier who, upon returning to Brazil, began to use the matrix of the *classes nouvelles* at Alberto Conte Institute of Education – the school where he worked. This pedagogic essay, called experimental secondary classes, gained visibility in the Brazilian educational field and was welcomed by the head of the Ministry of Education's Board of Secondary Education, Gildásio Amado, who enabled the introduction of national legislation that allowed these classes to be held in Brazilian schools. It is important to observe this transnational connection between the *classes nouvelles* and the experimental secondary classes carried out above all by Luis Contier, because, to a large extent, the contents of the legislation allowing experimental classes in Brazilian secondary education had been elaborated by this pedagogic mediator. Despite this umbilical link between the French and Brazilian experiences regarding the renewal of public secondary education, it is thought-provoking to point out that the experimental secondary classes had their singularity.

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