

Escola Sem Partido and the (real) problems of Brazilian education: an argumentative analysis

Escola Sem Partido e os (reais) problemas da educação brasileira: uma análise argumentativa

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SUMÁRIO: Neste artigo, temos como objetivo discutir acerca de uma estratégia retórico-argumentativa de emprego de instâncias argumentativas epistêmicas para deslegitimar as Circunstâncias Motivadoras que são constitutivas da polêmica concernente ao Escola Sem Partido (ESP). Para isso, utilizaremos um texto representativo do posicionamento contrário ao ESP que objetiva reenquadrar o Problema Prático concernente às possíveis necessidades de ação que se fazem relevantes na esfera de práticas sociais educativas. Para isso, assumiremos como pressupostos a Teoria da Argumentação, em especial, as noções de macroestruturação e de configuração funcional da argumentação epistêmica (Toulmin, 2006[1958]; Toulmin; Rieke; Janik, 1984[1978]) e prática (Fairclough; Fairclough, 2012; Gonçalves-Segundo, 2019). Mais pontualmente, assumimos os estudos sobre Polêmica (Amossy, 2017), Análise Crítica do Discurso (Fairclough, 2003; Gonçalves-Segundo, 2018), além da discussão cognitivo-funcional sobre o Posicionamento Epistêmico (Gonçalves-Segundo, 2020b; Marín-Arrese, 2011). Nesse sentido, identificamos uma articulação que, em primeira instância, busca questionar a validade da leitura do estado-de-coisas presente circulante no discurso de posicionamentos favoráveis ao ESP e, em segunda instância, contesta as Circunstâncias Motivadoras que justificam a proposta do ESP e que alimentam o dissenso polêmico. Isso, por seu turno, resulta em uma tentativa de reenquadrar o Problema Prático, de maneira a buscar focalizar tópicos e tematizações consideradas de suma importância para a manutenção de um sistema educativo que carece de aperfeiçoamento.

KEY-WORDS:
Argumentation;
Escola Sem Partido;
Critical Discourse Analysis;
Polemics;
Brazilian Education.

ABSTRACT: In this article, we aim to discuss about a rhetorical-argumentative strategy of using epistemic argumentative instances to delegitimize the Motivating Circumstances that are constitutive of the polemics concerning Escola Sem Partido (ESP). We use a text representative of the position contrary to the ESP that aims to reframe the Practical Problem concerning the possible needs for action that become relevant in the social sphere of educational practices. For this, we assume the Argumentation Theory, in particular the notions of macrostructure and functional configuration of

epistemic argumentation (Toulmin, 2003[1958]; Toulmin; Rieke; Janik, 1984[1978]) and practical argumentation (Fairclough; Fairclough, 2012; Gonçalves-Segundo, 2019). More punctually, we assume the studies on Polemics (Amossy, 2016; 2014), Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Gonçalves-Segundo, 2018), in addition to the cognitive-functional discussion on Epistemic Positioning (Gonçalves-Segundo, 2020b; Marín-Arrese, 2011). We identified an articulation that, firstly, seeks to question the validity of the reading of the current state of affairs in the discourse of favorable positions to the ESP and that, secondly, challenges the Motivating Circumstances that justify the ESP proposal and that fuel controversial dissent. This, in turn, results in an attempt to reframe the Practical Problem, in order to seek to focus on topics and themes considered of paramount importance for the maintenance of an educational system that needs improvement.

INTRODUCTION

1. “School without Party [...] gained strength especially after 2013, driven by the organized conservative right in Brazil. Despite declaring itself nonpartisan and without ideology, it promoted clear conservative values. For example, it sought to ban discussion on topics related to gender and sexuality in schools – considered, within the project, as partisan topics.” Available at: <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/bolsonaro-president-without-party-strategy-depoliticize-brazil/>>. Accessed on: 11/02/2020.

In mid-2016, still at the core of what would later be considered the first peak of attention to the Movement, the Escola Sem Partido¹ (ESP) gained notoriety for having reached the form of a Bill of Law. As a result, it became the subject of discussions in several spheres of human activity (Bakhtin, 2003), especially Educational, Political, and Journalistic. We understand, then, the importance of seeking to perceive circulating discourses about the dissent (Amossy, 2016; 2014) established in this interconnection of such spheres, especially considering the ESP as a reflection of a global movement of attempting to return the school to functions considered basic, particularly considering education in Brazil as a significantly recent constitutional achievement.

Thus, we aim to show how the article to be analyzed, as linguistic materiality, is instantiated as a reflection of voices resistant to the attempt to limit the social space occupied by the school in the Brazilian context. More specifically, how the text in question, representative of a movement that rises in resistance to the advancement of ESP at the national level, ends up allowing to identify rhetorical strategies that aim to question the legitimacy of ESP’s proposals through a reframing of the argumentative problem central to the discussion concerning education in Brazil.

For that, we use the theorization of Toulmin (2003[1958]) and Toulmin; Rieke; Janik (1984[1978]) for the analysis of the functional configuration of epistemic argument, as well as the diagramming of its macrostructure. Complementarily to that, we will assume the critical rereading and rearrangements proposed by Gonçalves-Segundo (2020a) and Gonçalves-Segundo; Isola-Lanzoni (2019) about the Toulmin model of analysis through a dialectical refra-

ming of the layout. Subsequently, we will analyze the practical argumentation, and for that we will assume the assumptions of Fairclough; Fairclough (2012), as well as the rereading of the analysis model advocated by Gonçalves-Segundo (2019). Finally, we will make the considerations about the data found, to summarize the interpretative possibilities discussed about the undertaking of argumentative strategies in the face of a polemic confrontation, especially with regard to the dispute concerning the reading of the present state of affairs that supports different perspectives regarding ESP.

1. ESCOLA SEM PARTIDO: ITS ORIGINS AND PROPOSALS

Despite having gained greater notoriety in the years of 2010s, the origins of Escola Sem Partido date back to 2003, when Miguel Nagib², lawyer, Attorney of the State of São Paulo and known as founder of the ESP Movement, was motivated to write an open letter to his daughter's teacher. This happened after an episode in which the teacher used São Francisco de Assis and Che Guevara to exemplify cases in which figures from the popular imagination would have died in the name their values. After this episode of discontent, the case had been locally discussed with the school administration, and the dispute had been solved until then.

However, supported by the premise that there could be an intention to transform the political figure into a saint when using such an analogy, an Association was created by Nagib under the justification that it was paramount “to fight against the abuse of which children are victims”³. Inspired by similar movements in the United States, such as No Indoctrination (Oliveira; Storto; Lanza, 2019), ESP originally proposes to combat what they consider political-ideological indoctrination.

2. “Miguel Nagib thoroughly backs President Bolsonaro’s aims. He founded Escola Sem Partido (Portuguese for School Without Party), an initiative to stamp out party politics from the classroom. Mr Nagib blames the left-wing governments of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff for what he says is the ‘indoctrination’ of Brazilian students.” Available at: <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48039435>>. Accessed on: 11/02/2020.

3. Extracted from “O professor da minha filha comparou Che Guevara a São Francisco de Assis”, originally in Portuguese. Available at: <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2016/06/23/politica/1466654550_367696.html>. Accessed on: 03/01/2017.

The ESP Movement has as its core to propose a supposed neutrality regarding the ways of conduct in the school ambience, especially on the part of teachers and, thus, intend to intervene in the school environment, through a Bill of Law (da Silva, 2019). Over the years, ESP has taken on other causes; in addition to the initial idea proposed to fight an alleged party-political bias in the classroom environment, the incisive objection to what they call “gender ideology” gained notoriety.

The proposal of ESP underlies the establishment of coercion mechanisms in the classroom environment as channels of communication between the School and the State in order to create apparatus that provide complaints of what they call “ideological harassment”. In Rocha’s words (2020, p. 10):

The movement’s focus goes beyond the central problems of Brazilian education. Themes such as the low quality of learning in the early grades, the huge dropout rates in high school, the growing blackout of teachers, remuneration and teaching performance are not on the agenda of Escola Sem Partido [...].⁴

4. Free translation.

As time went by, movements of resistance to ESP’s proposals also attracted supporters, resulting in an attempt to re-view the discussions about the directions to be followed with regard to the constitutive needs of Brazilian educational scenario. This, in fact, ends up being a responsive consequence not expected by ESP itself, in that “it is possible that some loose ends can be tied, somehow linking these themes to the way we have thought about school” (Rocha, 2020, p. 10). That is, discourses against ESP reinforced the need to focus on more urgent and relevant problems in our educational system. Thus, the notes listed by Rocha (2020) echo criticisms that have been occurring for years, as we identified in the text to be analyzed, published in 2016.

2. THE TEXT AS LINGUISTIC MATERIALITY AND INSTANCE OF A POLARIZED POLEMIC

The text used here as a *corpus* constitutes, among others, a possible response to the polemical discussion⁵ (Amossy, 2016; 2014) concerning Escola Sem Partido; more specifically, about whether ESP, as Bill of Law, should be implemented or not. In view of being an instance that fosters and fuels the set of arguments at the system-level (Goodwin, 2020; da Silva, 2022), demarcating a social position in a discussion of a deliberative nature, we assume that the discussion undertaken textually should be understood as of a practical nature: to a greater or lesser extent, texts that feed the polemics are for or against such implementation. In addition, we observed the possibility of using epistemic argumentative instances in order to delegitimize the Motivating Circumstances of the recurring argumentation in favor of ESP, notions that will be presented in more detail below.

The text to be analyzed is situated among a network of texts (Vološinov, 1973) aimed at promoting and supplying the space for discussion and, thus, demarcating social positions that will potentially be deliberated, in fact, in the political sphere. That said, the reading of the reality that would result in Motivating Circumstances for the ESP is questioned by the arguer through a series of epistemic argumentative movements, resulting in alternative readings of the present state of affairs that constitute the educational scenario.

Thus, as the arguer presents us in the conclusion of his opinion article, by discouraging a reader's adherence to the perspective put forward by ESP supporters and which is the result of a distorted reading of the present state of affairs, the arguer undermines the reasons given to implement the ESP. It is, therefore, a perspective that ends up reframing the practical problem and, thereafter, questioning the polemic.

5. Studies of Polemics, engendered in the articulation between argumentative and discursive studies, have gained space in recent years. Amossy's research (2016; 2014), for example, seek to discuss the intrinsic valuation of such a modality, that is, the constant presence and incitement to controversy in the public media scenario.

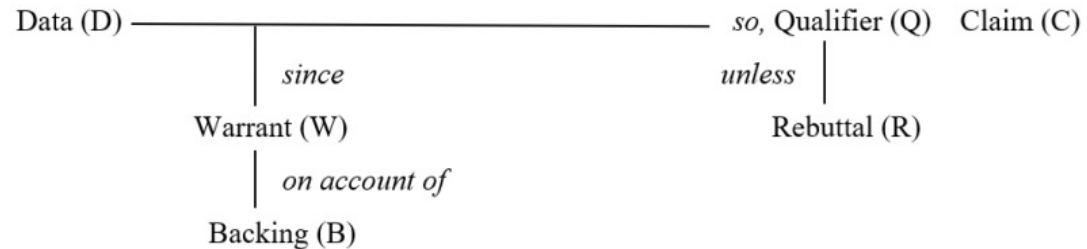
We will then proceed to discuss the assumptions about the argumentative layouts of epistemic and practical functional configuration.

3. BETWEEN THE EPISTEMIC AND THE PRACTICAL: FUNCTIONAL CONFIGURATION AND MACROSTRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENTS

Originally proposed by Toulmin (2003[1958]) and later expanded by Toulmin; Rieke; Janik (1984[1978]), the analysis layout of the epistemic argumentation consists basically of three minimum elements: **Claim (C)**, **Data (D)** and **Warrant (W)**. The credibility of an argument would depend on the consistency of the link between **Data** and **Claim**, considering the **Warrant**, often implied, that allows the transition between the components, and that this support is strong enough to resist a **Rebuttal**.

Figure 1 - Stephen Toulmin's Layout of Arguments

Source - Toulmin (2003[1958]).



This proposal, however, lacks a dialectical anchoring that characterizes situations of argumentative interaction, marked by dissent (Amossy, 2016; 2014). Reinterpretations of the layout were proposed, in a way that they sought to integrate elements and rearrangements that could enrich the descriptive and analytical potential when considering the linguistic, cognitive and discursive points of view of the argumentative activity. Thus, the argumentative consistency would also consider the process of obtaining the participation of an auditorium in the face of a proposal to conceive reality.

For this, the notion of **Argumentative Question** presented by Grácio (2010) is relevant, as well as the development of such concept, **Epistemic** and **Practical Problems**, proposed by Gonçalves-Segundo (2020a). **Argumentative Question** is the thematic cutout of a discussion in which different possible perspectives are dialectically conceivable given the dissent that constitutes the argumentative activity. In other words, **Argumentative Question** corresponds to a thematic cutout, marked by dissent, for which there are different possibilities of response and each of these constitutes, in itself, a **Claim** – when epistemic problems –, or a **Claim for Action** – when practical problems.

Gonçalves-Segundo (2020a, p. 240) proposes the notion of **Epistemic Problem** that consists of “problems that are centered on conceptions of reality, that is, perspectives related to ways of seeing and understanding the functioning of society, nature, human behavior, semiosis, among countless other possible objects of thematization”⁶. Thus, the **Epistemic Problem** is constituted from an excerpt about a discussion of collective interest to which different responses and perspectives are possible, in the form of a **Claim** (da Silva; Isola-Lanzoni; Gonçalves-Segundo, 2021). Every **Claim** is discursively oriented, insofar as it represents a materialization of the values that underlie the linguistic constitution of a given social actor.

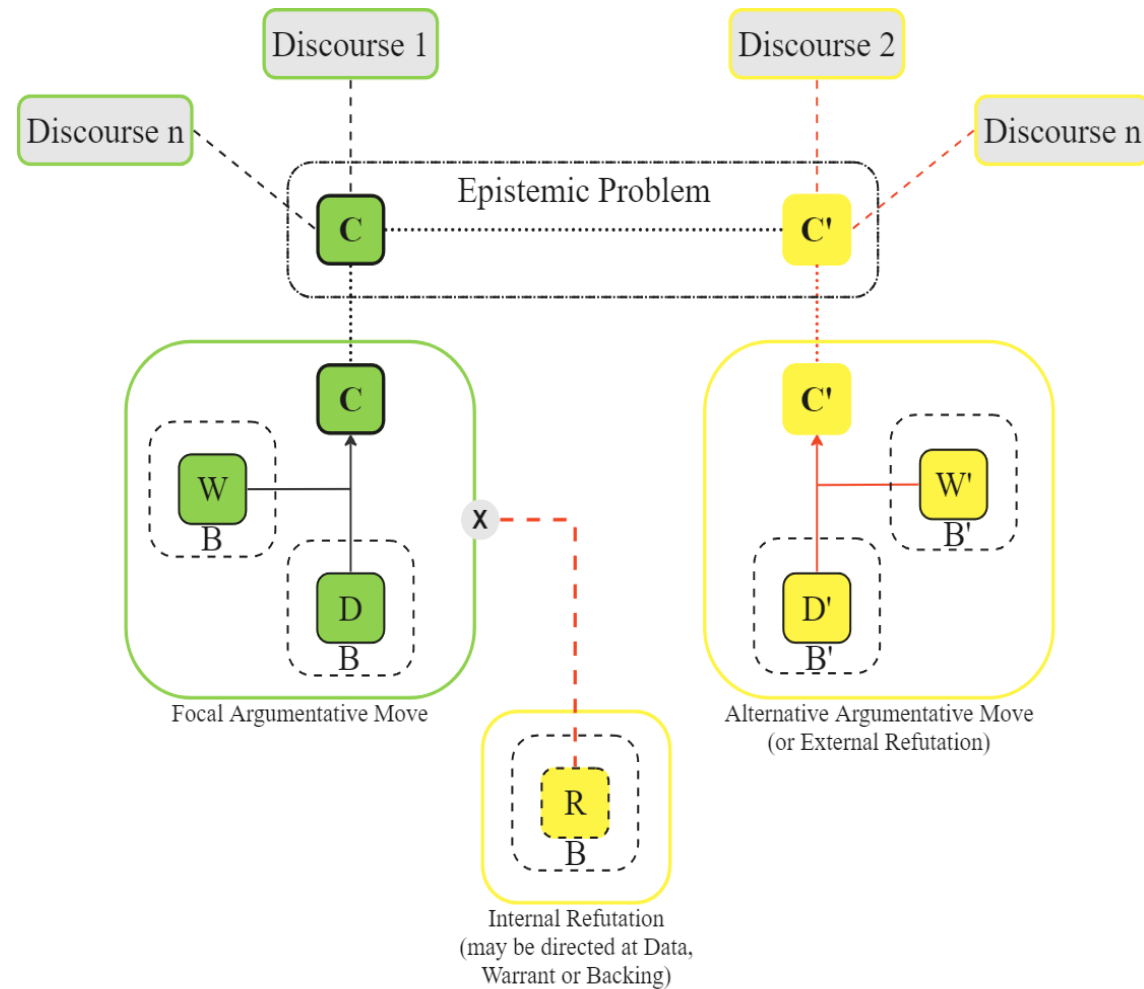
6. Free translation.

When applying this dialectical reframing to the Toulminian layout, we have Figure 2 below:

Figure 2 - Functional Configuration of Epistemic Argumentation

Source - Gonçalves-Segundo (2020a).⁷

7. Claim C with a more prominent outline consists of the Claim focused on a certain argumentative movement. Claim C' consists of the representation of other discourses that compete in the sense of proposing different conceptions of reality. The simple dotted lines represent the dialectically co-occurring Claims as possible responses to the Epistemic Problem. As advocated by Gonçalves-Segundo (2020a) and in line to studies developed by Chilton (2014), regarding the dimension of the Qualifier, it is understood that “modality is constitutive of any and all propositions, signaling their status of reality with regard to the orator’s conception” (Gonçalves-Segundo, 2020a, p. 265).



Each of the possible **Claims** presupposes, explicitly or implicitly, **Data** that support them, as well as a **Warrant** that enables the connection between such components. In addition to this dialectical reframing of the layout, Gonçalves-Segundo (2020a) and Gonçalves-Segundo; Iso-la-Lanzoni (2019) also propose a rereading through which the **Backing**⁸ element, previously conditioned to the **Warrant**, can now integrate other components of the layout – as in the **Data**, **Warrant** and **Rebuttal** cases presented in the Figure 2 above. Finally, the **Rebuttal** component is now seen as an argumentative instance that, when external, is oriented to defend the other position of the debate (C'). Internal **Rebuttals**, in turn, are oriented to attack some point of the focused argumentative movement (C), in order to reduce the acceptability and plausibility of the focused response.

With regard to the practical functional configuration, we will assume the original proposal of Fairclough; Fairclough (2012), as well as the rereading and rearrangement proposed by Gonçalves-Segundo (2019). In the field of practical argumentation, we have an argumentative activity oriented to persuasion. We understand by persuasion the activity that aims to obtain adherence by a public to decide favorable or unfavorable to a possible intervention project in the course of reality – in this case, between arguing for or against the implementation of ESP. Assuming the premise that discourses are ways of representing (Fairclough, 2003), the authors consider that these ways of conceptualizing reality are capable of giving rise to reasons for acting, seeing that different propositions are put forward as a possibility to solve the established practical problem when conflicting standpoints converge on the same focus of attention.

Practical Problems can be oriented both to the alternatives of and to the motivations for an action:

8. We will assume in this article that the Backings instanced by arguers are evidential in nature. Since it is outside the scope of this work, the discussion about the evidential instances will be punctually addressed when relevant to the development of the analysis.

In the first framework, there is a prior agreement on the Goals to be pursued and, therefore, some level of consensus on the intended future state of affairs. [...] The second framework involves a discussion on the implementation of a Claim for Action, that is, a reality change project that is guided and will be debated in the light of both (i) its pertinence, productivity, compatibility, and effects in relation to the Goals and Values of the groups involved in the interaction, which includes the ways in which they rank their priorities, as well as (ii) their pertinence, as there may even be disagreement regarding the reading of the Circumstances, that is, the evaluation of the present state of affairs. (Gonçalves-Segundo, 2019, p. 15-16)

This deliberative activity of adhering to an intervention project in the reality course proposed by an arguer is related, among other factors, to the consistency that an argumentative movement presents. This consistency is related to “the strength of the link between Values, Consequences and Circumstances that involve the Action proposed with regard to the Goals placed for deliberation” (Gonçalves-Segundo, 2019, p. 11), elements that constitute the layout proposed by Fairclough; Fairclough (2012).

As originally proposed by the authors, this possibility of solution is called a **Claim for Action**, which dialectically presupposes a **Counter-Claim**; both based on **Goals** that are, in turn, based on **Values**. The elements of the originally proposed layout are related as follows:

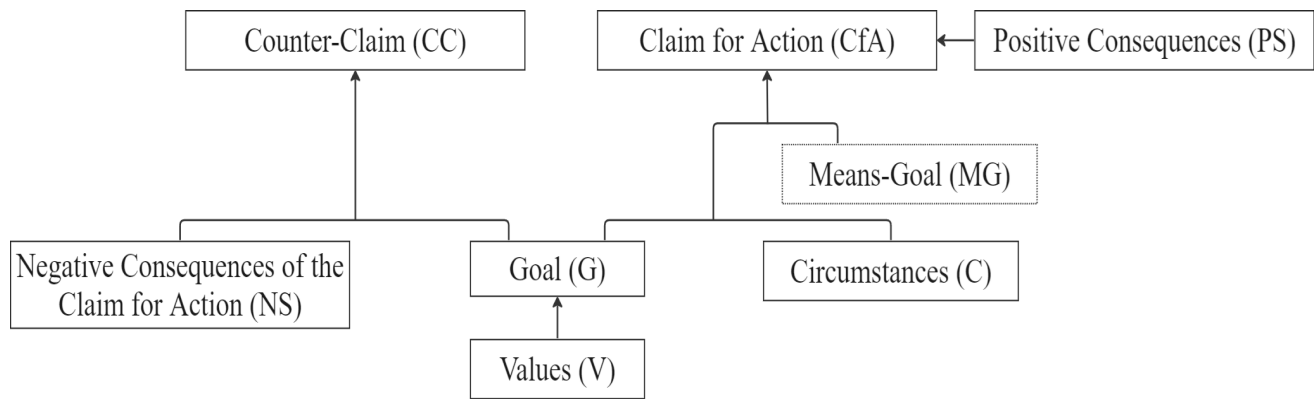


Figure 3 - Fairclough & Fairclough's Layout of Arguments

Source - Adapted from Fairclough; Fairclough (2012).

When considering the social actors that constitute the argumentative interaction of a practical nature, Gonçalves-Segundo (2019) points to the need of reconsidering the original conception of **Circumstances**. Originally, this notion, taken with the **Goals**, disregards agency and possible resistance to such an impetus for action. Gonçalves-Segundo (2019) proposes, then, a distinction between the Circumstances involved in the motivation to act (**Motivating Circumstances**) and those involved in the evaluation of which proposal to implement (**Enabling, Blocking, Adverse, and Catalyzing Circumstances**).

We are especially interested in the notion referring to the **Motivating Circumstance**; this consists of reading the present state of affairs that gives rise to the **Practical Problem** and, consequently, demands a **Claim for Action**. Reading the present state of affairs is done in a way to perspective it negatively, becoming conceptualized “as undesirable, unacceptable or, at least, improvable” (Gonçalves-Segundo, 2019, p. 123).

That said, we move on to the analysis.

4. DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The text to be analyzed, entitled *Escola Sem Partido: Doutrinação comunista, Coelho da Páscoa e Papai Noel*⁹, by Leonardo Sakamoto, consists of a knot in the network of statements that focus on the discussion about ESP. Published in June 2016, the text is in one of the significant moments¹⁰ of the media discussion about this theme.

9. The text, translated into English, can be found in the appendix section. For a better use of the analysis to be presented, we recommend reading the text in its entirety.

10. The media instances concerning ESP had peaks in July 2016 and November 2018, moments that correspond, respectively, to the final period of President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment process and the subsequent presidential election.

In terms of the structure of the discussion put forward by Sakamoto, we can observe five distinct moments. The first five paragraphs are dedicated to the contextualization of the topics listed by the arguer as motivators of the discussion to be undertaken in the subsequent paragraphs. Once contextualized, he puts forward an argumentative sequence that aims to answer the following question: WHAT IS THE (REAL) DIMENSION OF PARTY-POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION IN BRAZILIAN EDUCATION?

In the sequence, the arguer addresses the second epistemic problem, which consists of the following questioning: ARE THE ESCOLA SEM PARTIDO MOVEMENT AND BILL(S) OF LAW CONSISTENT WITH THE PROPOSALS THEY CLAIM TO DEFEND? Finally, Sakamoto dedicates himself to a moment of explanatory discussion, and then concludes his text with a reframing of the practical problem that originally supports the ESP discussion, seeking to answer the following: SHOULD THE DISCUSSION ABOUT ESP REALLY BE TAKING PLACE?

That said, we will start the analysis based on the contextualization made by the arguer and the questioning about the reading of the state of affairs put forward by the counter discourse; that is, the discourse in favor of ESP. In the first two paragraphs of contextualization, Sakamoto lists reasons that justify the initial statement that *things are getting rough in education*. Sakamo-

to itemizes problems, referring to recent events at the time, which induce the reader to revisit episodes negatively valued by the arguer and that can be understood as potentially harmful to education as a sphere of social activity:

(1) There are so many problems that you can assemble your combo: theft of lunches, schools occupied [by protesters], striking (and broken) universities, budget limit proposal threatening investments in the area, National Education Plan¹¹ completing two years with NO goals met, and so on.

Subsequently, however, Sakamoto brings to his text another perspective in order to evince it due to the relevance it has had in various spheres of Brazilian society, namely the perspective of the out-group: *judging by what is going on in the National Congress and in the media, the great evil of Brazilian education has another name: "Party-Political Indoctrination"*.

The counterpoint established by Sakamoto at the outset is relevant to the extent that this signals the outline of the problem to be discussed, as well as that, by means of a hyperbolic figure of speech – *the great evil of Brazilian education* – the writer renounces one of the possible ways of reading reality. In addition, we can perceive the passage inside quotation marks as a sign of distancing from the content conveyed, whose Status of Reality (Gonçalves-Segundo, 2020b) denounces that it is, for the conceptualizer, an *irrealis* (Chilton, 2014) perspective on the problems that affect Brazilian education.

This thematic section of the discussion is also relevant insofar as we can identify both what Sakamoto considers a real problem, especially what was exposed in the first paragraph, and what, for him, is a non-real problem.

Thus, to support the perspective that the agenda regarding the supposed party-political indoctrination does not constitute a pertinent discussion on education, the arguer brings to the

11. The National Education Plan for the 2014/2024 decade, instituted by Law No. 13,005/2014, defined 10 guidelines that should lead Brazilian education in this period and established 20 goals to be met in effect. This same law reiterates the principle of federative cooperation in educational policy, already present in the Federal Constitution and in the Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education.

fore public figures who plead in favor of ESP, in addition to a research information about the topic under discussion.

12. Alexandre Frota de Andrade is a Brazilian politician and a former model and porn actor. A former member of the Social Liberal Party (PSL), Frota was elected Federal Deputy by the state of São Paulo in the 2018 general elections. For more, see: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandre_Frota>. Accessed on: 10/20/2020.

13. Despite the choice for a prototypically perceptive verb (*show*), it is a communicative evidential since it is information conveyed through communicative means.

14. Lupa is the first news agency in Brazil to specialize in the journalistic technique known worldwide as fact-checking and was founded on November 1, 2015.

15. Law No. 12,527, enacted on November 18, 2011, regulates the constitutional right of citizens to access public information and is applicable to the three branches of the Union, the states, the Federal District and the municipalities. This Law represented an important step towards the consolidation of the Brazilian democratic regime and the strengthening of public transparency policies.

(2) The issue is the main cause of the Escola Sem Partido movement, the same one defended by one of the greatest specialists in Pedagogy (FROTA, Alexandre), in a meeting with Minister Mendonça Filho at the end of last month.

ESP is not on the list of vindications to the interim holder of MEC, as shown by the Lupa agency. Even so, the casual chat pleased the movement president, the lawyer and attorney of the State of São Paulo Miguel Nagib. See the little message on his Facebook: “I want to publicly thank Alexandre Frota for defending the Escola Sem Partido Bill in his audience with the Ministry of Education. We do not demand a good record.”

It is relevant to indicate at this point the co-occurrence of figures who are publicly known and who would, potentially, represent sources of authority. Sakamoto describes events related to the then Minister of Education and Alexandre Frota¹², a figure known for performing work in the area of adult entertainment and whose presence, therefore, would be little expected in discussions of such an order. Based on this counter-expectation, the arguer discloses to the reader the potential unpreparedness of the figure welcomed by the minister, as well as how it ended up getting attention from the ESP Movement leader. This happens by means of irony accompanied by a structure emulating a practice of academic genres in the section *one of the greatest specialists in Pedagogy (FROTA, Alexandre)*, so that Sakamoto resorts to a dissociation between the agenda defended by ESP and the seriousness expected of discussions regarding education by shedding light on the importance given by Nagib to this meeting.

It is worth mentioning that, using a communicative¹³ evidential – *as shown by the Lupa agency*¹⁴–, the arguer brings to his text the information, obtained through the Lei de Acesso à Informação¹⁵, that discussions about educational subjects were not part of the agenda for that meeting. This integrates, then, the contextual information that underlies the assumed perspective that the polemics about ESP constitutes secondary issues.

In the second moment of his text, Sakamoto plead in favor of the position that questions the pertinence of the points advocated by ESP. We can assume that the arguer responds to the following epistemic problem: WHAT IS THE (REAL) DIMENSION OF PARTY-POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION IN BRAZILIAN EDUCATION? For this, it is relevant to observe the following argumentative macrostructure:

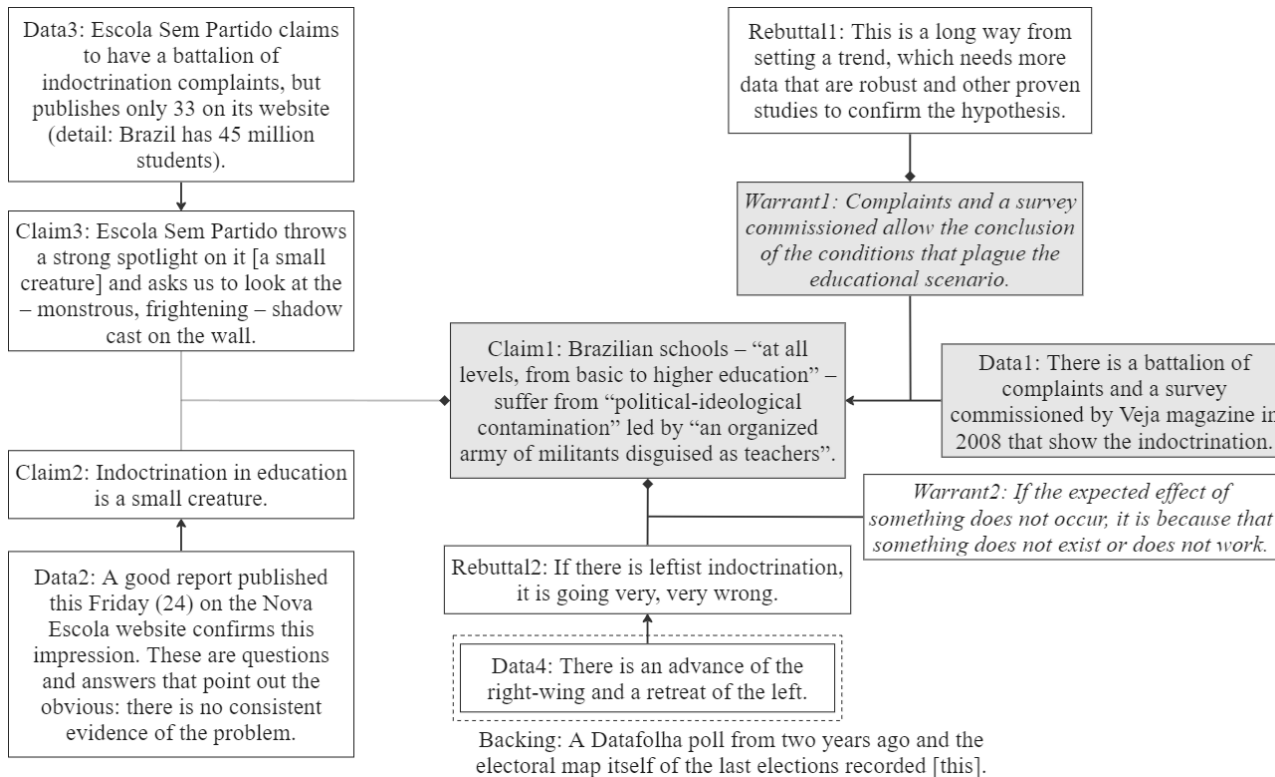


Figure 4 - The (real) dimension of party-political indoctrination in Brazilian education

Source - Own elaboration.

16. The elements in gray correspond to arguments that can be identified in the instantiation of the arguer's text, but which constitute argumentative movements attributed to a counter-discourse, hence the distinction in colors. The diamond at the tip of the vertices represents an attack/rebuttal relationship, signaling disagreement. The arrow at the tip of the vertices represents an argumentative movement, signaling the connection of a set of premises that allows legitimizing a claim.

17. Such discourse is materialized, for example, in the text "Mensagem de fim de ano do Escola Sem Partido ao militante disfarçado de professor", published in December of the same year, in which Nagib emulates the structure of a letter addressed to teachers, whom he calls "hardened molesters". Available at: <<https://www.gazetadopovo.com.br/rodrigo-constantino/artigos/mensagem-de-fim-de-ano-do-escola-sem-partido-ao-militante-disfarçado-de-professor/>>. Accessed on: 01/20/2017.

18. Nova Escola is an independent and non-profit organization, maintained by the Lemann Foundation. The Lemann Foundation is a family and non-profit organization that

We can identify Claim1¹⁶ from propositions brought to the text through direct speech in the last contextualization paragraph. This Claim is presented as belonging to the out-group and whose propositions are mostly excerpts taken from the Movement's website. Then, the arguer presents Claim2 and Claim3 that, together with the first, constitute the possible responses to the epistemic problem regarding the dimension of the supposed ideological indoctrination in Brazilian education.

Sakamoto is significantly dedicated to discouraging adherence to the ESP perspective by advocating their propositions are untrue. That is, the arguer presents proposals for observing reality through Claims (Claim2 and Claim3) and Rebuttals (Rebuttal1 and Rebuttal2) that aim to question the factuality of the information conveyed by the out-group.

Claim2 consists of a counterargument aimed at reframing more explicitly the proportion of what would be *the great evil of "party-political indoctrination"*. When using a term such as "small creature", we can observe that the resource used by the arguer not only disqualifies the attention given to this "constitutive" aspect in the educational scenario – it is worth mentioning that Sakamoto does not deny the possibility of its existence –, but also allows the reader to recall the circulating discourse that teachers would be conceived as monstrous, and often harmful to education¹⁷.

Data2, supporting Claim2, has as its source a report in a dossier format published by Nova Escola¹⁸ and whose authorship is attributed to an authority figure, Rodrigo Ratier¹⁹. The use of such a source allows Sakamoto to attribute greater credibility to Claim2, thus being able to contribute to the argumentative consistency and, therefore, to the adhesion by a potential reader.

In order to contrast the sources that would work to support Claim1, in a move to possibly undermine the credibility of the statements that support the out-group's positions, the arguer uses data provided by ESP own website. It presents 33 complaints of indoctrination cases, which Sakamoto compares proportionally to the number of approximately 45 million Brazilian students. Thus, the cases presented to justify the relevance of the proposal represents 0.00007% of the national scenario. In addition to these reporting cases, Sakamoto also recovers a survey commissioned by Veja magazine, which is not recognized for its performance in publications related to the area of education. These data, together, challenge the Warrant1, which consists of a minimally generalizing social value that justifies the transition from Data1 to Claim1.

In stating that *this is a long way from setting a trend, which needs more data that are robust and other proven studies to confirm the hypothesis*, Sakamoto objects the validity of the Warrant of the out-group's argumentative movement. Rebuttals that undermine Warranties aim to annul a worldview, which, in this case, would result in the reconceptualization that localized complaints and commissioned survey work as enough and sufficient justifications to substantiate the intention to modify official documents and, therefore, all dynamics of the educational field at the national level.

This information regarding the proportion of cases in relation to the number of students also works as Data for Claim3, which is presented right after Claim2:

(3) Indoctrination in education is a small creature, but Escola Sem Partido throws a strong spotlight on it and asks us to look at the – monstrous, frightening – shadow cast on the wall.

By referring to elements that go back to the myth of Plato's cave, Sakamoto makes it possible, even if indirectly, to read that the referencing object used by the Movement is nothing more than the direct result of a series of manipulations. This, in turn, ends up weakening the statements that constitute Claim1, central to the justification of the Movement and the Bill.

collaborates with initiatives for public education throughout Brazil.

19. Rodrigo Ratier is a journalist and professor at Faculdade Cásper Líbero. He founded a free writing course, and taught public and private High School. He holds a PhD in Education from the University of São Paulo (USP). Source: <<https://novaescola.org.br/autor/10/rodrigo-ratier>>. Accessed on: 10/17/2020.

20. Datafolha is a research institute of Grupo Folha. The institute conducts statistical surveys, electoral, opinion and market surveys, serving the Folha Group itself and external customers. The institute does not conduct electoral polls and assessments of public administrations exclusively for governments, parties, candidates, and politicians.

21. Reference to the 2014 presidential election period.

Finally, the arguer also brings data released by Datafolha²⁰, as Backing, in parallel to the reference of the electoral map of two previous years²¹ that point to an advance of the right-wing of the political spectrum and a consequent retreat of the left. The use of an evidential Backing gives Rebuttal² greater credibility and this, consequently, contradicts the information proposed in Claim¹. This is made possible since an advance of the right-wing in the national scenario seems to be incongruous with the statement that the left-wing would have infiltrated education with party-political objectives and that it would have success in relation to this supposed architectonic plan.

Sakamoto then discusses the contradictions that permeate the ESP Movement, as well as the proposals they advocate. In this way, we can identify an epistemic problem whose formulation can be made as follows: ARE THE ESCOLA SEM PARTIDO MOVEMENT AND BILL(S) OF LAW CONSISTENT WITH THE PROPOSALS THEY CLAIM TO DEFEND?

To support his position, Sakamoto uses information conveyed by the report published on the Nova Escola website. The Claim firstly flirts with an alternative possibility of interpreting the Movement's own name. Sakamoto fits the attribute "*Sem Partido*" ("*Without Party*") – which the Movement carries in its name and to which it refers when it is necessary to reaffirm its supposedly exempt character – to then use evidential sources to demonstrate that this exemption is questionable. The first argumentative movement undertaken is as follows:

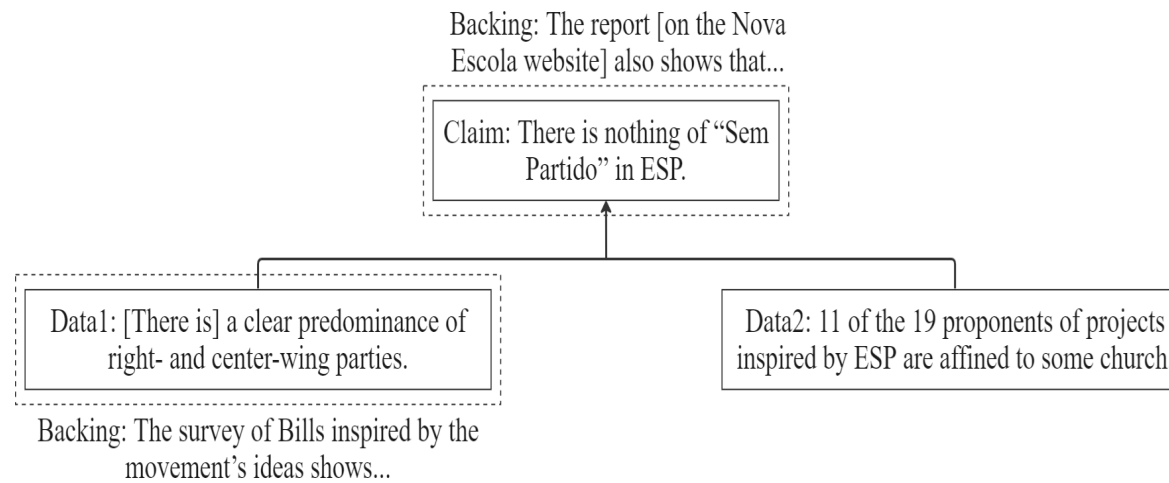


Figure 5 - There is nothing of “Sem Partido” in ESP

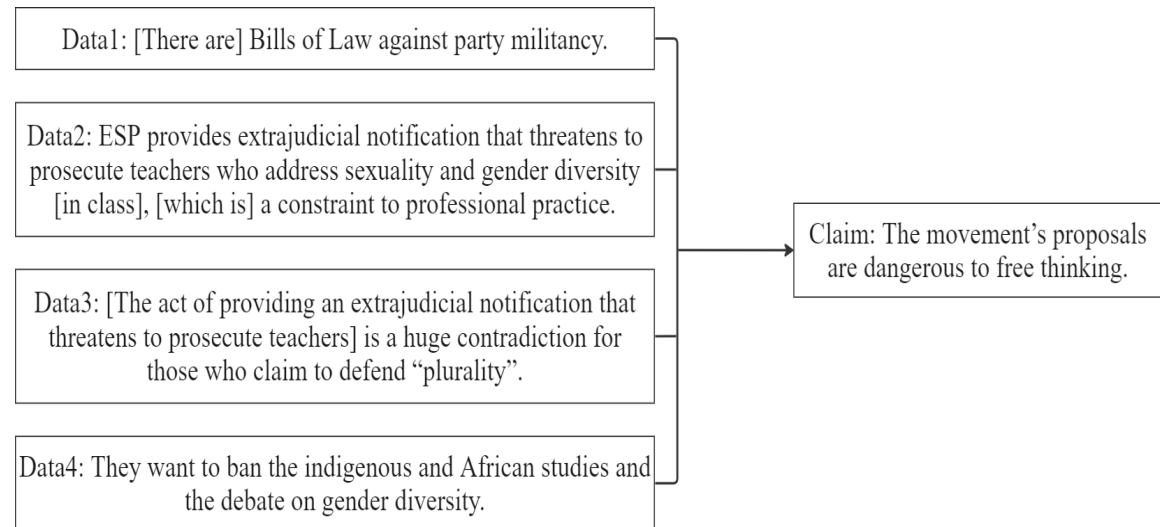
Source - Own elaboration.

Data1 points to a questionable aspect about the political parties that commonly represent the proponents of Bills of Law in the municipal, state, and federal chambers. In fact, five proponents are representatives of the PSC, Partido Social Cristão (the Christian Social Party), whose values are marked by social conservatism and Christian democracy. In the wake of affiliations linked to religious entities, Sakamoto presents Data2, which, as ironically pointed out by the arguer, would illustrate the “independent” standards of ESP.

That established, the arguer moves on to the discussion that aims to defend the Claim that *the movement’s proposals are dangerous to free thinking*. The diagram of the macrostructure of the argument undertaken is as follows:

Figure 6 - The movement's proposals are dangerous to free thinking

Source - Own elaboration.



Throughout the two paragraphs subsequent to the Claim, Sakamoto presents data to support his statement, as well as elaborates on examples that explain the veracity of the information that he puts forward:

(4) The movement's proposals are dangerous to free thinking. In addition to Bills of Law against party militancy, ESP provides extrajudicial notification that threatens to prosecute teachers who address sexuality and gender diversity [in class]. Besides being a constraint to professional practice, it is a huge contradiction for those who claim to defend "plurality" [...].

The use of the adverb *besides* demonstrates that the proposals, originally aimed at combating alleged party-political indoctrinations, have also been accompanied by an attempt to censor the discussion of topics concerning sexuality and gender diversity.

This attempt to inhibit the discussion of certain topics seems to go, *de novo*, against what the Movement claims to advocate, as well as what is found in Article 2 of the Bill of Law. This can be observed in its principle II referring to the “pluralism of ideas in the academic environment”, as well as in principle III referring to “freedom to learn, as a specific projection, in the field of education, from freedom of conscience”. By stipulating that the discussion of certain topics becomes subject to extrajudicial notification, we can observe a serious inconsistency with the proposal that arises with the supposed intention of guaranteeing freedom and pluralism. Based on this, the arguer states that *besides being a constraint to professional practice, it is a huge contradiction for those who claim to defend “plurality”*, establishing Data3 that supports the initial claim about the dangerousness that ESP represents to free thinking.

In order to further illustrate how this danger would affect the structuring of official documents about education in Brazil, Sakamoto seeks to explain cases in which ESP would end up trying to lead the course about legal education decisions in the opposite direction to cases that are considered as successful.

(5) [...] it is the opposite path of high-performing countries in education: United States (where some states have been offering sex education since the 19th century), New Zealand, Sweden and Finland, France. Ontario, Canada, has a curriculum that discusses homoaffective relationships and gender identity. Here, they want to ban the debate.

In this excerpt, the arguer resorts to political-administrative instances that are attributed a good performance regarding the administration of educational themes. In this sense, the argumentative technique undertaken by Sakamoto comes close to the argumentation by the model, proposed by Perelman; Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971, p. 363-364), in which “persons or groups whose prestige confers added value on their acts may be used as models”, so that “a model shows what behavior to follow, and also serves as a guarantee for an adopted behavior”. Thus, when

realizing that the proposals put forward and advocated by ESP go in the opposite direction to the models in education, ESP would therefore occupy the position of antimodel. In this way, “in argument by the antimodel one is trying to get others to be different from someone” (Perelman; Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971, p. 367) so that, in this case, it represents a disincentive to the adhesion of ESP propositions.

To conclude this part of his argumentation, Sakamoto introduces the information that studies referring to the history of the ethnic formation of a people, according to the values conveyed by the ESP, can be framed in such a way as to serve only as an excuse to favor social movements.

(6) Same thing with indigenous and African studies, classified as a gateway to favor “social movements”. In Norway, the curriculum is generous with the Sami people, original inhabitants of northern Scandinavia. “Indoctrination”, over there, is called respect for the diversity and roots of the country’s history.

Discussions about the peoples that contributed to the constitution and the establishment of the Brazilian identity are necessarily intersected by references to moments such as the process of attempting to subordinate indigenous peoples, as well as the process of enslavement of peoples brought from the African continent. This, in turn, ends up tangentially touching issues such as the historical debt to these peoples, which could be understood by the out-group as an incitement to “social movements”, so that this can be perceived, from the perspective of ESP, as something characteristic of the left-wing pole of the political spectrum. Thus, Sakamoto establishes that this resistance to the need to debate about such themes, together with the resistance to discussions regarding gender diversity, constitutes Data4 that supports the claim that ESP and its proposals are dangerous to free thinking. In order to finalize this moment of his argumentation, the arguer refers to the information that such discussions in Norway, a reference in

education, are seen as relevant and fundamental to citizen formation. This again fits ESP as an antimodel and discourages the reader's adherence to such envision of reality.

This need to pay attention to the real reasons that motivate the ESP is aimed at reframing the relevance of discussing the aspects proposed by the Movement and, therefore, questioning the pertinence of the polemic discussion. Thus, considering the inconsistencies discussed and disclosed by Sakamoto, the arguments put forward work in a way to delegitimize the ESP's Motivating Circumstances, which would result in the non-relevance of discussing its main Claim for Action – to approve the legal text presented in the Bill and, therefore, to establish ESP at the national level.

In this sense, Sakamoto then argue, at the end of his text, at the level of the polemics about Brazilian education. Based on a practical problem that can be understood as SHOULD THE DISCUSSION ABOUT ESP REALLY BE TAKING PLACE?, he points to Motivating Circumstances that, potentially, would be more representative and relevant when it is necessary to take action with the goal of better determine education-related decisions.

(8) The low level of the debate, by the way, is the saddest. With so many important things to discuss, with so much urgent action to take, we find ourselves immobilized on a false issue, sustained by fragile and beyond questionable arguments.

As we are trapped in the smokescreen of alleged indoctrination, we impoverished the education debate a little more. Winners are those who bet on confusion and the containment of small civilizing advances in the area of the recent years.

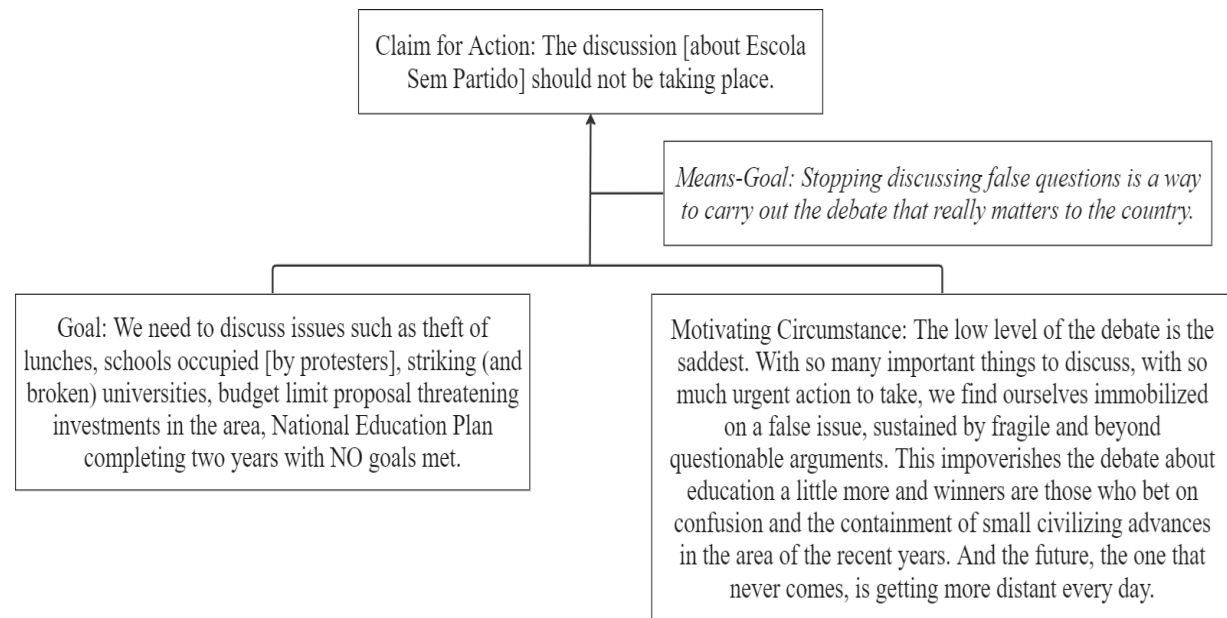
And the future, the one that never comes, is getting more distant every day.

Framing the ESP's arguments as questionable, Sakamoto reinforces that the Circumstances that would in fact be relevant to the progress of the educational sphere in Brazil are neglected.

Therefore, when considering (i) the issues established at the beginning of his discussion as constituents of a reasonable Goal to be achieved, as well as (ii) the Motivating Circumstance that the debate that currently occupies the political, educational, and journalistic spheres in Brazil would be doubtful, we can conclude that the most reasonable Claim for Action to be undertaken would be: *the discussion [about Escola Sem Partido] should not be taking place.*

Figure 7 - Should the discussion about ESP really be taking place?

Source - Own elaboration.



Sakamoto reframes the Practical Problem about what should be the subject of discussion regarding the sphere of educational activity in Brazil. He not only establishes a position markedly contrary to the implementation of ESP, but also seeks to re-perspective the demands that require deliberation in order to achieve, in fact, an improvement in the performance of Brazilian schools – namely, demands that range from resources as food to the implementation of educational policies such as the National Education Plan.

FINAL REMARKS

Our objective was to discuss some interpretative possibilities about the undertaking of argumentative strategies in the face of a polemical debate. For this, in order to interpret how epistemic instances were articulated in a subsidiary way to the practical discussion that intersects the polemics, we identified strategic moments that guided the writer's arguments to understand the Argumentative Questions to which he responded.

When questioning the Circumstances that are potentially motivating for an action (supposed party-political bias), we observed a disincentive to the Claim for Action (implementation of the ESP) linked to those Circumstances. Assuming that the Circumstances of a practical argument are ways of envisioning reality from the perspective of a particular social actor and that this actor can emulate the values of a group, we were able to identify in the analyzed text how different positions choose to focus different priorities on regards the performance and needs of Brazilian education. Thus, when considering this disincentive undertaken by Sakamoto's argument, the Claim for Action of ESP that would potentially result in a change in the course of reality ceases to occupy a relevant position as a possible answer to a Practical Problem.

In addition, we were able to observe two distinct levels of argument. First, one that is restricted to a specific text – which, in this case, is dedicated to questioning the reading of the present state of affairs that circulate in the discourse favorable to ESP. Second, one that is undertaken at the system-level of controversy, in order to delegitimize the Motivating Circumstances that underlie the discourse favorable to ESP and which, therefore, reframes the Practical Problem to be discussed in the educational field.

Finally, we believe that it would be of great benefit to map in more detail, and in a systematic way, how the different functional configurations are articulated in a polemic interaction, in order to potentially identify a corresponding pattern about how the components of a particular layout eventually articulate with those of the other.

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Leonardo Sakamoto

06/24/2016 7:00 pm

Things are getting rough in education. There are so many problems that you can assemble your combo: theft of lunches, schools occupied [by protesters], striking (and broken) universities, budget limit proposal threatening investments in the area, National Education Plan completing two years with NO goals met, and so on.

But judging by what is going on in the National Congress and in the media, the great evil of Brazilian education has another name: “Party-Political Indoctrination”.

The issue is the main cause of the Escola Sem Partido movement, the same one defended by one of the greatest specialists in Pedagogy (FROTA, Alexandre), in a meeting with Minister Mendonça Filho at the end of last month.

ESP is not on the list of vindications to the interim holder of MEC²³, as shown by the Lupa agency. Even so, the casual chat pleased the movement president, the lawyer and attorney of the State of São Paulo Miguel Nagib. See the little message on his Facebook: “I want to publicly thank Alexandre Frota for defending the Escola Sem Partido Bill in his audience with the Ministry of Education. We do not demand a good record.”

I wonder what world these people live in to think that Brazilian schools – “at all levels, from basic to higher education” – suffer from “political-ideological contamination” led by “an organized army of militants disguised as teachers” (this is serious, guys, it’s all on the movement’s website <http://www.escolasempartido.org/>).

APPENDIX

ESCOLA SEM PARTIDO: COMMUNIST INDOCTRINA- TION, EASTER BUNNY AND SANTA CLAUS²²

22. Free translation. The text, in its original Portuguese version, is available at: <<https://blogdosakamoto.blogosfera.uol.com.br/2016/06/24/escola-sem-partido-doutrinacao-comunista-coelho-da-pascoa-e-papai-noel/>>.

23. Ministry of Education.

Indoctrination in education is a small creature, but Escola Sem Partido throws a strong spotlight on it and asks us to look at the – monstrous, frightening – shadow cast on the wall.

A good report published this Friday (24) on the Nova Escola website confirms this impression. These are questions and answers that point out the obvious: there is no consistent evidence of the problem.

Escola Sem Partido claims to have a battalion of indoctrination complaints, but publishes only 33 on its website (detail: Brazil has 45 million students). These complaints and a survey commissioned by Veja magazine in 2008 are what sustain the movement's causes.

This is a long way from setting a trend, which needs more data that are robust and other proven studies to confirm the hypothesis. And there is another little thing: if there is leftist indoctrination, it is going very, very wrong. And a Datafolha poll from two years ago and the electoral map itself of the last elections recorded an advance of the right-wing and a retreat of the left.

The report also shows that there is nothing of “Sem Partido” in ESP. The survey of Bills inspired by the movement's ideas shows a clear predominance of right- and center-wing parties. The champion is PSC, with five proponents. Another fact that illustrates the “independent” character is the religious connection: 11 of the 19 proponents of projects inspired by ESP are affined to some church.

The movement's proposals are dangerous to free thinking. In addition to Bills of Law against party militancy, ESP provides extrajudicial notification that threatens to prosecute teachers who address sexuality and gender diversity [in class]. Besides being a constraint to profes-

nal practice, it is a huge contradiction for those who claim to defend “plurality” and it is the opposite path of high-performing countries in education: United States (where some states have been offering sex education since the 19th century), New Zealand, Sweden and Finland, France. Ontario, Canada, has a curriculum that discusses homoaffective relationships and gender identity. Here, they want to ban the debate.

Same thing with indigenous and African studies, classified as a gateway to favor “social movements”. In Norway, the curriculum is generous with the Sami people, original inhabitants of northern Scandinavia. “Indoctrination”, over there, is called respect for the diversity and roots of the country’s history.

I suspect that behind the shouting there is an enormous conceptual confusion. Escola Sem Partido chooses Marxism as the main wound, without even bothering to define what the hell it means.

Between the lines is the understanding that Marx’s ideas, the failure of real socialism, and the unforgivable atrocities of communist regimes are thrown into the same balance.

In this way, it is easier to illustrate the monstrous and terrifying shadow that “dominates Brazilian universities” – another statement without any evidence.

In fact, I really wanted to experience such university. I graduated in Journalism and I did my master’s and doctorate in Political Science at the University of São Paulo. And, definitely, it’s not like that there. On the contrary, the New School, a university that received me as a visiting researcher, is much more progressive than my beloved USP. And, ironically, it is in a communist city (New York) of a communist country, the United States.

To make matters worse, the main evangelist of this Bible of Evil, in the opinion of the movement, would be none other than Paulo Freire. Paulo Freire, of all people, a convinced pacifist and obsessed with the idea that people should think freely.

This is something of those who have never read a line from the most respected Brazilian educator in the world. Or, if they did, they didn't understand anything.

The low level of the debate, by the way, is the saddest. With so many important things to discuss, with so much urgent action to take, we find ourselves immobilized on a false issue, sustained by fragile and beyond questionable arguments.

As we are trapped in the smokescreen of alleged indoctrination, we impoverished the education debate a little more. Winners are those who bet on confusion and the containment of small civilizing advances in the area of the recent years.

And the future, the one that never comes, is getting more distant every day.

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