

EDUCATION FOR ALL AND THE DREAM OF AN ALTERNATIVE PRISON POLICY IN BRAZIL

Abstract

This article examines the development and the legacy of a policy making experience that was undertaken in Brazil from 2004 to 2006, under a project labelled 'Educating for Freedom'. The project sought to provide prison inmates with access to education. It was carried out by a coalition that comprised the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice and the UNESCO Office in Brasilia, with financial support provided by the Japanese government. The central argument in the article is that, by taking seriously the 'right to education in prison', the project helped define a broad, transformative agenda for the prison system in Brazil. The final portion discusses what should be done to keep this agenda alive, what we can realistically expect from it, and how educational policies fit into those prospective observations. The article was originally presented as a graduate student paper for the "Strategizing Public Policy" course at Northeastern University (Boston, MA).

Résumen

Este artículo analiza el desarrollo y el legado de una experiencia de elaboración de políticas que se emprendió en Brasil a partir de 2004–6, en el marco de un proyecto llamado “Educando para la libertad”, el cual buscaba brindar a los presos acceso a la educación. Este proyecto fue llevado a cabo por una coalición formada por el Ministerio de Educación, el Ministerio de Justicia y la Oficina de la UNESCO en Brasilia, y contó con apoyo financiero del gobierno japonés. El razonamiento central del artículo es que, al tomar en serio el “derecho a la educación en la prisión”, el proyecto ayudaba a definir una amplia y transformadora agenda para el sistema carcelario en Brasil. En la última parte se discute lo que debería hacerse para mantener viva esta agenda, qué se puede esperar, de manera realista, de ella, y cómo encajan las políticas educativas en esas eventuales observaciones. El artículo fue presentado, originalmente, como un trabajo de graduación para el curso “Elaboración de estrategias de políticas públicas” en la Northeastern University (Boston, MA).

Translated by Magdalena Padrón

Résumé

Cet article examine le développement et le suivi de l'élaboration des politiques entreprises au Brésil entre 2004 et 2006, dans le cadre d'un projet appelé « Éduquer pour la liberté », qui entendait faciliter l'accès à l'éducation pour les détenus. Ce projet a été mené par une coalition formée du Ministère de l'Éducation, du Ministère de la Justice et le Bureau de l'UNESCO à Brasilia; il a également reçu l'appui financier du gouvernement japonais. Cet article montre qu'en prenant au sérieux le « droit à l'éducation en prison », on contribue à définir un agenda plus ambitieux et transformateur pour l'ensemble du système carcéral au Brésil.

La dernière partie de l'article propose des pistes pour soutenir la dynamique engagée, examine ce qui peut être fait de manière réaliste et pose la question de l'insertion des politiques éducatives. L'article a été présenté, à l'origine, comme travail de fin des études pour le cours « Élaboration des stratégies de politiques publiques » à la Northeastern University (Boston, MA).

Translated by Magdalena Padrón

1. Introduction: About Feolas and Garrinchas

One of the most famous soccer anecdotes in Brazil dates back to the 1958 World Cup. It is said that before a decisive match against the Soviet Union, the coach Vicente Feola was giving some instructions to the players. He then drew on a blackboard what he thought to be a perfect scheme for the Brazilian squad to dominate the game. When he finished explaining what he was expecting from the players in order to get that scheme done, the rebellious right winger Mane

Garrincha raised his hand and asked: 'Did you also make this deal with the opponents?'

The history of public policy literature is, somehow, similar to this debate between Feola and Garrincha. There is a group of scholars who think of policy-making as a clear-cut process, in which goals are objectively identified and the best ways to reach these goals are then examined and selected. They are just like Feola. There is, nonetheless, another group of scholars who are sceptical of this linear reasoning. More like Garrincha, they tend to see policy-making as a less determined experience, whose pieces and movements can take more than a single arrangement. Likewise, the meaning of a policy experience depends both on the pieces/movements one looks at, and on the way one looks at these pieces/movements. John Kingdon (1995), for instance, examined the so-called agenda-setting process and interviewed elite policy-makers in the areas of health and transportation. His conclusion was that the agenda-setting process is actually performed by a handful of people, who master to put together three streams that flow independently in society: the streams of problems, politics and policy. Debora Stone (2002) took a step back and discussed how policy experiences are intensively permeated by political disputes taking place in a given community. Accordingly, she theorised about the resources that groups and organisations use in the 'polis', in order to strategically advance alternative claims about the common good. (Neo)institutionalists may seek to map either the various 'policy domains' (like Van Horn et al., 2001) or their often problematic relationships (as Miller and Barnes, 2004). Those various accounts are like the (multiple) faces of Janus: all of them are right, and none of them is right.

In this article I subscribe to the second perspective. Thinking more like Garrincha, I consider policy-making as simply an expression of the human impetus to re-imagine the future, building bridges with unexplored possibilities for the organisation of our collective life. Thus, I argue that to write about policy is (or can be) to capture the dreams that have been dreamed throughout and beyond institutions. Curiously, this was how Dr Martin Luther King Jr tackled racial inequality in the United States. Far beyond a 'policy agenda', he said he 'had a dream'. Besides being 'policy solutions', school desegregation and affirmative action can be regarded as some of the possible ways for dreaming his dream within boards of education and universities.

This paper gives an account of a project that sought to address the educational needs in Brazilian jails.¹ Named 'Educating for Freedom', this project was originally developed by a consortium including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice, and UNESCO's Office in Brasilia, with financial support from the Japanese government. My central argument will be that, by taking seriously the 'right of inmates to education', the project has helped open a window for a broader transformation in the Brazilian prison system. In the final section, I will discuss how to keep this window open, where it might take us,

and how education fits in these prospective observations. Drawing from the metaphor I just articulated, however, I will take an unusual style for assessing the project and its impacts. In the coming sections, I will seek to determine 'in which stage the dream emerged', 'who has been dreaming the dream', 'what the dream has been about', and 'how the dream might affect the dreamers' next day'. Will they still have reasons to keep dreaming?

2. The Dream Stage

If I could replace these lines with a link to the memories of my first visit to a jail just after becoming a government official in the National Penitentiary Department, this would be my choice to introduce the reader to the prison landscape in Brazil. I had been to jails before, but as a private lawyer I had another perception about them. I used to consider jails as a strange place for me and my clients, and struggled to get both of us away from them. On that day, however, I felt like I did not have this choice: I was part of the situation. And although the situation I was seeing was not the worst I would see (the jail was a small one, with no records of rebellions or violence among inmates and correctional officers), it was definitely discouraging: Inmates were all very young, with nothing to do in their cells besides waiting for time to pass.

I am aware that, no matter how many times I write the last paragraph that scene will never be clear to the reader. So, let me try to use some numbers. Drawing from the available data for 2004, it can be fairly estimated among the roughly 400,000 people currently serving in Brazilian jails less than 20 per cent are involved in educational activities and less than 25 per cent are involved in labour activities, even though all prisoners have extremely low rates of access to school and the workplace before incarceration. Add the fact that incarceration weakens family ties and there are almost no programmes to consistently help inmates after release. One of the possible results, or at least the result we are getting in Brazil, is that recidivists will represent an average of 60 per cent of the growing prison population in the country. In other words, prisons are one of the biggest sources of violence in Brazil, no matter how many fences and walls we place around them.

In contrast to those numbers, believe it or not, Brazil has one of the most progressive legislations in the world. In 1984, Congress passed a comprehensive reform in the prison system through the Law of Penal Execution. According to this law, every jail should have a Technical Classificatory Board (CTC) with the task of gathering information about the inmates and their personal histories. With such information, the CTC should design individualised rehabilitation programs. Prison personnel in charge of implementing these programmes should be carefully selected and continuously trained. Community Councils and State Prison Councils should inspect the jail conditions so as to make the

administration accountable, while Patronage Centers should help inmates find opportunities after release. And perhaps most importantly, this framework was entirely articulated through the idea of 'rights'. The law expressly recognises the right of inmates to material support, health care, education, social assistance, work, and revenue.²

The progressivism of Brazilian legislation is acknowledged even internationally. In 2005 I was requested to follow a project aimed at improving prison management in Brazil, which already had some history of implementation in the state of São Paulo. The federal government wanted to make that experience available to other states and I was in charge of understanding it and conceiving a strategy for its possible dissemination. The essential component of the project was a handbook produced by the International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS), located in the United Kingdom and led by the respectful professor Andrew Coyle. The handbook contained guidelines for prison management, all of them designed in accordance to international covenants on Human Rights. Throughout the project, a selected state team was expected to learn about those guidelines and develop strategic plans so as to 'fill the gaps' that might exist between the handbook and the prison system they were in charge of.³ As soon as I was introduced to the project staff, one of the British consultants appointed by ICPS said to me: 'After all, it will be easier to work in your country than in many other countries we have worked. Your domestic legislation echoes all the international guidelines for a prison management based on Human Rights. We do not have to lose time debating whether an inmate should be treated with dignity.'

From a policy perspective, a rights catalogue is at least a good starting point. On the one hand, rights serve as a powerful source of political mobilisation, helping citizens and movements name unfair situations and expose societal fractures.⁴ On the other hand, rights bring up the hope of enforcement – namely by Courts. In Brazilian prison policy, however, there is a severe limitation to the use of rights in this latter fashion. Overall, Courts decide cases involving prisoners' rights at an extremely slow pace. Litigation against the 'Hideous Crimes Law' gives a good example of that: in 1990 Congress passed legislation denying some rights to inmates charged and eventually convicted for committing 'hideous crimes'. Unlike ordinary inmates, the ones in this latter situation could not ask to be released prior to their trial, with or without bail, nor could they ask for parole. Right after the law was passed, attorneys started arguing that it was unconstitutional under the due process clause. At first sight, State Courts did not endorse this position, nor did the Supreme Court. But about ten years later, the Supreme Court finally accepted the thesis of unconstitutionality. The law was partly struck down and Congress still struggles to pass new legislation re-establishing the distinction between 'ordinary crimes' and 'hideous crimes' at the level of penal execution.⁵

Besides taking time to play a more critical rôle in prison policy, Brazilian judges tend to decide cases on a 'retail basis' and, overall, never take a step beyond issues of 'due process'. Therefore, they are not likely to set remedies when the cases deal with collective rights (such as education, health care, labour, etc.). The reason has been somehow anticipated by the policy literature: there is no prevailing legal theory sustaining a more activist perspective from the judges.⁶ Whereas many Human Rights lawyers and Constitutional Law commentators suggest that Courts can set mechanisms for the enforcement of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights,⁷ judges send different opinions, escorted in three main arguments: United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) norms are 'programmatic', depending upon the action of the executive branch; ordinances enforcing ECOSOC norms would affront the separation of powers; and judicial opinions should limit themselves to what is 'possible'.⁸

The consequence is that the enforcement of 'rights' in Brazil ends up relying on the political commitment of public officials, which makes things much more complicated. Due to the federative system, each state has its own prison system which can be subject to the authority of a State Secretary of Justice, Public Security or Prison Management.⁹ Then again, this autonomy is at best misleading. First, legislation affecting penal execution is normally of federal competence. States can pass legislation only to specify topics already addressed by federal legislation; they cannot put anything new on the table. Second, the federal government holds the most significant budget for investments in prison improvement, thanks to the creation of the National Penitentiary Fund (FUNPEN) at the federal level in 1994. There is no data available for how much states have spent with prison policy since the new law was passed, but it is known that half of the existing spots in Brazilian jails have been funded with federal money over the last 13 years (DEPEN, 2007). And the construction of new jails is by far the highest expenditure in a growing prison system such as the Brazilian one.

Federalism produces, in this picture, two sources of policy inventiveness. The federal government can come up with comprehensive solutions and force changes in the states. This is what happened with the architectural patterns of jail buildings. Since 1994, the National Council for Prison and Criminal Policy (CNPCCP) has developed construction standards so as to guarantee that the buildings will have minimum living conditions. Without complying with those standards, states could not ask for federal money to build new jails. Eventually, states did comply.

If the federal government lacks capacity to develop these comprehensive policies, though, states can come up with their own ideas and try to obtain some of the budget that is available at the federal level. This gives room for innovation at the state and, sometimes, even at the local level. The controversial issue of motherhood in jail provides a good example. Studies suggest that it is

healthy for young children to keep visiting their mothers after incarceration, but it is totally unhealthy for them to be in contact with the prison environment (Santa Rita, 2007). To manage this contradiction, some states started installing 'toy-lib's' in their jails, preferably away from the cells. In these almost costless 'toy-lib's', children can get together with their parents and with one another, whereas playing and learning. 'Toy-lib's' are now a best-practice in female prison management, and the federal government itself is 'selling' new units to the states through the brand-new PRONASCI – National Programme of Security with Citizenship, which I will explain later in this paper.¹⁰

But, overall, the case of prison policy is close to the worst possible scenario. In 2002, a report by the Federal Court of Accounts (TCU 2002) estimated that more than 90 per cent of the federal budget for prison policy was spent in the construction of new jails. Moreover, it observed that the reduced amount for everything else, including education and labour programs, was not used to fund consistent policies but rather punctual and dispersed initiatives proposed by the states. Hence, the report made clear that none of the government levels was really seeking to make structural investments in the 'social branch' of penal implementation. So, when one talks about 'prison policy' in Brazil, he or she is pretty much talking about confinement.

Last, but definitely not least, there is an ambiguous public opinion. In the 1970s and 1980s, when the country was under a military dictatorship, a number of Human Rights movements emerged taking a stand on prisoners. After the dictatorship fell, many of those movements (such as the Gabinete de Apoio Juridico a Organizacoes Populares – GAJOP in Pernambuco, the Instituto Acesso a Justica – IAJ in Rio Grande do Sul, and the nation-wide catholic group Pastoral Carceraria, to name a few) remained struggling for prisoners' rights. Together with some international organisations such as Human Rights Watch (1999) and Amnesty International (1999), they have been responsible for making the broader public aware of the poor conditions in the country's jails. Recent movie productions such as *Carandiru* and *The Prisoner of the Iron Bars* have played the same role. Nevertheless, Brazilians have become deeply scared of urban violence over the last years, and much of this legitimate concern has been 'transferred' to a more aggressive attitude towards offenders. To make things worse, jails themselves became a source of such frightening violence. Gangs formed in the jails of São Paulo are now operating both inside and outside of the prison system, and have become famous in the last years for attacking public buildings in response to harder disciplinary policies. Rebellions in jails of Rondonia and Rio de Janeiro finished with dozens of inmates killed, a fact that has embarrassed the country before the Inter-American Human Rights System. In sum, there is virtually no good time to dream about prison policy.

3. The dreamers

As Kingdon stated, 'there is a difference between a condition and a problem. We put up with all manner of conditions every day: bad weather, unavoidable and untreatable illnesses, pestilence, poverty, fanaticism. As one lobbyist said: if you have only four fingers on one hand, that's not a problem; that's a situation. Conditions become defined as problems when we come to believe that we should do something about them. Problems are not simply the conditions or external events themselves, there is also a perceptual, interpretive element' (1995:109–10). In the dream metaphor, dreamers have a major importance. They are the ones who make sense of the setting, articulating a narrative that leads to a problem and some possible alternatives to face this problem.¹¹

The distinction between the dreamers and the stage is, nonetheless, blurred. What counts as a piece on the stage at a given moment can gain life and join the dreamers, as well as who counts as a dreamer at a given moment can leave the dream and dream about something else. Finally, there may be either pieces or potential dreamers on the stage that are not noticed until (for a variety of reasons) they happen to be on the spot. For now, I will allude to the initial dreamers and their general circumstances, since this will enhance the explanatory potential of this paper. The links and alliances with a broader audience are already part of the project dynamics, which will be addressed in the coming section.

In 2003, two sectors of the Brazilian federal government were facing particularly important changes for the purposes of this paper. Within the Ministry of Justice, the National Penitentiary Department (DEPEN) went through structural reform so as to convey two additional units: a General-Coordination for Social Reintegration and Support to the Released, and a General-Coordination for Prison Service Training. Those units were aimed at improving the prison system by developing nation-wide policies for the benefit of inmates/released and the prison staff. At least, such organisational reform moved the centre of gravity in prison policy away from the mere confinement of people. This became clear in May 2004, when DEPEN produced a (by then) reserved report to the Minister of Justice.¹² Entitled 'Brazilian Prison System: Diagnosis and Propositions', this document was heavily inspired by critical criminology literature.¹³ It emphasised that incarceration was not the solution for violence and crimes, nor should it simply isolate offenders from society. On the contrary, it indicated that prison should play a secondary rôle in public security policies, and when mobilised it should primarily contribute to overcome the conflicting history that has existed between offenders and society. For the most part, the document argued, offenders have a personal and familiar history of exclusion and vulnerability that keeps them attached to violence and crimes. A consequential prison policy should be able to face this condition and to 're-integrate' the parties in the conflict. Giving value to prisoners' rights would be a good first step towards this end.

Another sector of the federal government experiencing important changes was the Ministry of Education, as the Secretary of Lifelong Education, Literacy and Diversity (SECAD) was created. SECAD became the unit responsible for reaching populations who had been historically excluded from educational policies. This was namely the case of youth and adult populations – including peasants, communities of colour, and indigenous peoples¹⁴ – who had not had the chance to go to school in their school age. To work with these people was not only a matter of reaching them, but also of developing a pedagogy that would respect their demands and expectations. That was the reason why the prison system was so attractive for SECAD: out of those 400,000 inmates serving in Brazilian jails in 2007, about 70 per cent had not completed fundamental education and 10.5 per cent were illiterate, not to mention the adverse conditions they faced to get engaged in a learning experience.

The partnership between DEPEN and SECAD would bring another component to the policy conversation: international cooperation. SECAD had an agreement with the UNESCO office in Brasilia that included financial support from the Japanese government. The agreement aimed at enhancing the supply of Youth and Adult Education in Brazil, with programmed investments in the states of Ceará, Paraíba, Goiás and Rio Grande do Sul, which had demonstrated a public commitment to the objectives of the 'United Nations Literacy Decade' (2003–2012). The investments were not so high to strengthen the ordinary programmes conducted by SECAD, but they could have significant impacts if used in pilot projects, as would be the case of 'Educating for Freedom'. SECAD had no doubt about channelling this money to interventions in the prison system, bringing UNESCO to the dream. With this new dreamer on the stage, the project's political reasoning would be considerably boosted. It is one thing to say that prisoners have the right to education; it is another to say that providing prisoners with the right to education is strategic to fulfil some objectives of a global agenda¹⁵ that includes forceful terms, such as 'education for all',¹⁶ 'United Nations literacy decade'¹⁷ and 'culture of peace'.¹⁸

The coming sections will further indicate how these dreamers and their different backgrounds interacted to build a 'frame' for the policy topic, but some of the cues for this 'frame' can be already noticed: first, it considers that a right of inmates to education exists as part of both a national and an international policy framework. Second, it considers that providing inmates with the right to education involves more than simply increasing the delivery of a good: it involves contributing to the restoration of their self-esteem and to their peaceful reintegration in society. In other words, education in prison should ultimately help inmates become the protagonist of their own life-stories. Psychology has used the term resilience, taken from the field of physics, to characterise an individual's capacity for psychological recovery and ability to resist situations of violence and adversity, reconstructing his or her bonds of affection and social/

professional relations.¹⁹ An explanation of the dream in itself will show how dreamers have gone about filling this frame with concrete policy solutions.

4. The dream in itself

The first step in the dream was a series of diagnostic visits to the already mentioned states of Ceará, Paraíba, Goiás and Rio Grande do Sul. Overall, the reports from the field confirmed the feelings that DEPEN and SECAD already had about this policy conversation: education contrasts with everything prison has been about, and it will not be effectuated without structural changes in the prison system. Specifically, however, the diagnosis helped the dreamers identify three levels of problems.

First, there were problems at the managerial level, including the mobilisation of both education and prison administration authorities at the state level. A channel for dialogue between these two sectors of the executive branch appeared to be necessary, in order to ensure that both would work co-ordinately towards supplying education to inmates.

Second, there were problems at the operational level, including the identities and practices of the professionals in charge of providing jails with access to education. Teachers should have different training, so that they would know how to deal with the constraints of the prison environment and the circumstances of inmates' lives. Teachers and correctional officers should also learn how to conciliate the often conflictive demands for security and assistance in the prison routines. And state governments should better value the prison personnel, which usually has had a poor image before society at large.

Finally, there was the problem of the 'right pedagogy'. Education in prison should help promote the autonomy and emancipation of the people it involves. Despite the specificities of the prison system, the project should benefit from the lessons of Youth and Adult Education, as well as of Popular Education,²⁰ which have confronted this same challenge.

The dreamers knew, however, that those three levels of problems should be addressed with the federative issue in mind. The decision was that the federal government should act as an inducer of the policy strategy, whereas the concrete responses should be elaborated from the bottom up. Accordingly, SECAD, DEPEN and UNESCO called a Workshop in Brasilia in October 2005. The invitation was sent to government officials working in the sectors of Prison Management and Youth and Adult Education in the four mentioned states plus São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, due to their big prison populations. As part of the Workshop, the three levels of problems previously identified were rephrased as 'generating' questions to the participants.²¹ For many of the invited states,

that was indeed the first time in which both the Prison Management and Youth and Adult Education teams were sitting together, confirming the diagnosis of disarticulation and reinforcing the need of a channel for dialogue.

One of the deals made in the Workshop was that the participants would spread the project message and raise awareness about it among other relevant actors at the state level, with the ultimate goal of promoting a Seminar in each of the states. And so it was that, by the end of 2005, the first of these events was held in Rio de Janeiro: the '1st Seminar for National Articulation and Construction of Guidelines for Education in Prison'. The Seminars had the double function of gathering propositions for a nation-wide public policy on education in prison, and forging political agreements among stakeholders in the State where they were being held. They also had the potential of inspiring similar mobilisation in the neighbouring states, whose government officials were also invited.

In order to stimulate the expected agreements and mobilisation, the Ministries of Justice and Education decided to fund state projects on education in prison, with resources being made available for the following strategic points: support for officials coordinating the supply of education in prison, training of professionals actually involved in the supply of education in prison (from teachers to correctional officers), and development/printing of pedagogic materials. This funding opportunity kept the state teams excited after backing from the Workshop in Brasília. Five of the six states attending it (Ceará, Paraíba, Goiás, Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro) plus Tocantins submitted their applications to the Ministry of Education. Altogether, 1.2 million reais (US\$564,000) were disbursed.

Seminars continued being organised in 2006. There were four events in Goiás, Rio Grande do Sul, Paraíba and Ceará, with the presence of teams also from Tocantins, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Paraná, Santa Catarina, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte, Piauí and Maranhão. Little by little, the Seminars became sites of collective construction where the voices of a wide and diversified public could make themselves heard. In addition to government officials in charge of education and prison policies, educators, correctional officers, researchers and specialists participated in the Seminars. And then, the serendipitous question emerged: where were the people who supposedly are the most concerned with the policy outcomes – prisoners? The glaring omission gave rise to a dilemma. What should be done to hear the voices of these people? It sounded impossible, or at least very difficult, to bring them to the seminars. The alternative was to use another collaboration agreement that existed at the federal level, now between the National Penitentiary Department and the Centro de Teatro do Oprimido in Rio de Janeiro (Theatre of the Oppressed Centre – CTO/Rio): the project 'Theatre of the Oppressed in Prison'.

The 'Theatre of the Oppressed' uses the Theatre-Forum technique as a strategy to establish dialogue about a given reality and generate political commitment to transform it.²² After participating in workshops for training in this methodology, prisoners and correctional officers involved in the 'Theatre of the Oppressed in Prison' project were asked to produce short plays bringing up oppressive situations that were part of their daily lives.²³ The plays reached a broader audience and turned into a Forum, in which authorities and society at large were represented. The inhuman aspects of the system were crudely revealed, leading the audience to *see* some problems and question their attitudes towards such problems. In many cases, indifference gave way to solidarity.

As part of the 'Educating for Freedom' Project, 05 consultations of prisoners were carried out in this fashion, and important contributions emerged from them.²⁴ Out of those contributions, it is worthwhile highlighting two examples. In the first, prisoners acted out a sketch in which their school materials were entirely damaged in a cell search, and teachers ended up blaming prisoners for the lack of care with them. During the debate, participants made some simple suggestions to the prison administration in order to avoid that fact, such as making shelves available in the schoolroom. With the shelves, prisoners would not need to take the materials to their cells, and they would be kept safe from the searches. The issue between the lines was, of course, the cultural shock between security and education. Another example spoke about the urgent need for sentence reduction through education. Imprisoned women staged scenes depicting dropping out of classes and the high turnover rate in enrolment, resulting from the fact that job posts were opened in the jail. Since the law expressively grants sentence reduction for work but not for education, and not every judge interprets the two situations as equivalent, prisoners preferred the former over the latter. Curiously enough, these same topics were raised in the seminars in a very abstract manner: now, they appeared lively and spontaneously as the plays were staged.

The final step in the process was the '1st National Seminar for Education in Prison', held in June 2006 in Brasilia. Attracting participants from all the Brazilian states, whether part of the governments or not, the Seminar maximised the outreach of the consultation. Moreover, it included activities that enriched the project in both its conceptual aspects (outstanding here was the presence of the two foreign specialists Marc De Maeyer and Hugo Rangel, who brought the accumulated experience of the International Observatory of Education in Prisons, linked to the UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Education); and in its political aspect (there was a demonstration-debate in support of sentence reduction for education, plus a roundtable with other sectors of the federal government to discuss a possible inter-relation between the supply of education and other social rights, such as the right to work).

Throughout the debates, the Seminar participants reached a consensus as to how state and federal governments should face the three levels of problems that

were mentioned above. The consensus was captured in the document 'National Seminar for Education in Prisons: Meanings and Proposals', adopted by UNESCO (2006). The document also called other governmental bodies to join the dream, namely: the National Council of Education (CNE) and the National Council of Criminal and Penitentiary Policy (CNPCCP).

With the 1st National Seminar, the project dreamers also consolidated a policy strategy that involved: the diagnosis of the problems affecting the supply of education in prison, the collective and participatory development of guidelines towards an effective supply, and the funding of experiences that could potentially face the problems whereas enlightening the ongoing policy conversation. Indeed, in 2007 the project almost repeated what happened in 2006. In September and October 2007 SECAD, DEPEN and UNESCO led three regional seminars: one in the Northeast region, one in the North/Centre-West region and one in the South/Southeast region. The federal government also signed six other financial agreements with the states of Acre, Pará, Maranhão, Pernambuco, Espírito Santo and Mato Grosso do Sul, investing about 0.7 million reais (0.35 million dollars) in strategic projects. And a 2nd National Seminar has held again in Brasília in October 2007.²⁵

5. Back to Real Life: the Dream and its Paradoxical Situation in the Aftermath of the 'Educating For Freedom Project'

In order to demonstrate how any policy experience is full of paradoxes, Debora Stone (2002) starts her book by mentioning several cases in the US history. After each case, she raises questions that have clearly no definitive answers. One can adopt the same attitude towards the 'Educating for Freedom' project. Has it been a sweet dream or a nightmare? Just like in the cases reported by Stone, the answer depends on the eyes of the beholder.

If the dreamers' goal was merely to increase the supply of education in Brazilian jails, then the dream has been a nice one. At the federal level, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice formalised an important Protocol of Intentions on September 27, 2005. Thereafter, an affirmative action clause was introduced in the 'Literate Brazil Program', giving special rewards to literacy trainers working in the prison system, and expressing the need of a distinguished pedagogical approach in prison literacy.²⁶ Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has caused the National Secondary Education Exam (ENEM) to become available in Brazilian jails. By taking this exam and earning good grades, inmates who have concluded secondary education can even gain access to a university through the University for All Programme (PROUNI). In the year 2006, the ENEM was held in jails in eight states reaching out to 141 units. And above all, this partnership between the ministries stimulates the emergence of new institutionalisms in the making of prison policy.

Getting down to the state level, the policy experience has considerably changed the pattern of public investments in education in prison. There have been more investments, greater geographical coverage and better criteria for investing. Prior to the 'Educating for Freedom' project, DEPEN was funding only one project targeted at promoting education in prison at the state level. The project employed the 'Tele-Classrooms' methodology, which was leading to various implementation problems, such as high drop-out rates, difficulties to form student groups, frequent demand of equipment maintenance etc. After the partnership with SECAD 12 other agreements were signed, all of them aimed at providing regular education programs.²⁷

At a more symbolic level, education in prison also became a core topic in the agenda of Brazilian Youth and Adult Education. In 2005, it was the theme of a panel at the 7th National Meeting on Youth and Adult Education – ENEJA. The same happened in 2006, at a Workshop held during the World Education Forum in Nova Iguaçu, state of Rio de Janeiro. Also in that year, the respected *Journal of the Network for Support of Literacy Action in Brazil* (RAAAB) released a special issue on the topic.

But, from the first meetings of the dreamers in 2005 to the 2nd National Seminar in 2007, it seems that their goal has been broader than reaching higher figures. They want to promote structural changes in the current prison policy, in order to make it more oriented to the idea of social reintegration. Education was never thought to be an individualised good, but a part of a comprehensive policy strategy that should provide inmates with access to job opportunities, revenue, sports, and culture, and reconstruction of family and community ties. The dream of education in prison, hence, is the dream of an alternative prison policy for the country.

In this case, there is either a long way to go or even a drawback. At the federal level, the agenda of social-reintegration has gone through a political shrinking, as DEPEN has been engulfed by the managerial tasks of a Federal Prison System. With the two first federal jails just launched in Catanduvas (state of Paraná) and Campo Grande (state of Mato Grosso do Sul), a lot of the Department's political and administrative energy has been channelled to tackle the demands of those units. Since a Federal Prison System could help the states isolate troublesome inmates, it is plausible that Brazilian society has strong expectations about it. But if the Federal Prison System operates at the expense of any other policy goals, the overall outcome will be a pervasive prison system, in which the majority of jails work poorly and a few of them try to handle the consequences.

This lack of priority for social reintegration is clear in the new DEPEN's structure. As I mentioned before, when the dream began in 2003–2004 DEPEN had two units in charge of conceiving and implementing nation-wide policies for the good of state prison systems – one focusing on the prison staff, and

the other on the prison population. In 2006, these units were fused. That could mean that the Department wisely decided to address both issues together, but in the day-to-day operations of the Brazilian public administration it just means that there will be fewer resources available for making of such policies. Indeed, some policy issues that emerged in connection with the 'Educating for Freedom' project either failed or faded.

For the failures, a remarkable example involves solidarity economy. Right after the *1st National Seminar*, a policy conversation started between DEPEN and the National Secretary for Solidarity Economy at the Ministry of Labour and Employment (SENAES-MTE). The plan was to integrate education in prison with training in solidarity economy. The desired outcome was that inmates and their families would be able to develop and run cooperative enterprises after taking specially designed courses in jail. So far, however, no pilot initiatives in this promising fashion have been tried.

Almost the same happened with the issue of prisoners voting. According to the legal doctrine with greatest consensus in Brazil, the right to vote should be guaranteed to all prisoners in temporary detention, that is, those who have not received a final sentence yet. Currently, this would apply to more than 80 thousand people who, nonetheless, have been deprived of this important political right. In the municipal elections of 2004, DEPEN sent an official note to the states requesting that measures be taken in order to enforce this right or, if that proved to be impossible, to ensure that temporary prisoners would be allowed to justify their non-voting. In 2005, DEPEN was invited to participate in the International Seminar on Prisoners Voting at the 5th World Social Forum, and joined a 'National Campaign for Prisoners Voting' together with several civil society organisations.

As part of this campaign, DEPEN was given the task of promoting a survey about the voting situation in the states. With the survey data, DEPEN prepared a report that was sent to CNPCP and many other bodies. Among the recipients was the Electoral Supreme Court, which set a Working Group in order to address the non-voting problem. Ultimately, the Electoral Supreme Court ordered local Electoral Judges to install ballot boxes in jails 'as long as it was possible'. But throughout this process, DEPEN has often emphasised the pedagogic component of prisoners voting. In various documents, the Department sustains that voting is not simply about depositing a piece of paper in a ballot box or pressing a set of buttons. Instead, it requires the ability to understand social problems and take up a stance towards them. An intuitive follow up would be to integrate the struggles for 'the right of prisoners to vote' with the broader scope of the 'Educating for Freedom' project, so that issues of citizenship would be brought to the core of the educational programs. Once again, no particular initiatives in this fashion were carried out.

There is more at stake than frustration, though. Some recent initiatives at the federal level are clearly aligned to the dream of an alternative prison policy. For example, I mention two major cases that happened in 2007. First is a literary contest for inmates that DEPEN, SECAD and UNESCO promoted, in partnership with the NGO 'Alfabetizacao Solidaria'. Under the suggestive name of 'Writing Freedom', the contest received almost 8,000 papers. Alfabetizacao Solidaria did an initial sorting and submitted the best 30 papers to two juries: one including members of DEPEN, SECAD, UNESCO and the Civil Society; the other a 'popular jury' on the Internet. The 'popular jury' put ordinary people in contact with the prison reality as the participant inmates portrayed it, whereas a possible publication with the best papers will serve as an important pedagogic tool for educational activities in the states, both inside and outside of jails. The awarded authors also found in the contest a source of income and personal incentive: each of them received a prize of R\$500.00 (US\$250) and a certain number of books. With all those features, the contest was truly a distinctive piece on the stage of Brazilian prison policy.

The other case involves the attempt of changing legislation. According to the current version of the Law of Penal Execution, sentence reduction is possible for work at the ratio of three worked-days per one day subtracted from the sentence. The extension of this incentive to subtract 'studied-days' is controversial at state courts: some judges accept it whereas others do not. The consequence was entirely demonstrated by the imprisoned women I mentioned above: there is an unfair competition between work and education in Brazilian jails, the latter being at great disadvantage. By including the topic in the Regional and National Seminars and calling legal authorities and Civil Society to debate it, the 'Educating for Freedom' project helped identify the need for this change in legislation.

In 2007 the Civil Office of the President submitted to Congress a draft bill seeking to explicitly introduce the possibility of sentence reduction for education in the law. Written under the influence of the project debates, this draft bill brings an innovative mechanism of 'Reward for Certification'. According to this mechanism, if an inmate graduates in Basic, Secondary, or Higher Education while serving sentence, she or he will receive a bonus of one-third of the studied-hours already accumulated in the final calculation of sentence reduction credits. Therefore, the draft bill advocates for a system that stimulates inmates' advances – which is expected to contribute to the restoration of their self-esteem and, consequently, to their peaceful reintegration into society. Of course, the debates about this proposition will not be easy. So far, representative Mauro Benevides, who is in charge of firstly examining the draft within the House of Representatives Constitution and Justice Commission, emitted a partly negative opinion, rejecting the idea of 'Rewarding for Certification'.²⁸

With all this back and forth, the dream of an alternative prison policy in Brazil after the 'Educating for Freedom' project faces a 'paradoxical' situation, as Debora Stone would like to say. Whereas bringing a different 'frame' to the policy conversation, the dreamers have experienced some relevant drawbacks. But such drawbacks actually demonstrated that *it is possible to make prison policy within a different frame*. It is in this sense that, as I mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the project helped open a 'policy window'.²⁹ Whether it is possible and worthy to keep this window open is what I examine in the following (and final) section.

6. What next?

In 2007 there was a change in the command of the Ministry of Justice and Minister Tarso Genro launched the PRONASCI – National Programme Security with Citizenship. In its very elegant formulation, the programme seeks to 'articulate security policies with social actions, emphasising prevention to crimes and targeting at the causes of violence'.³⁰ Towards that end, the programme focuses on people from 15 to 29 years old who have either been in close contact with a criminal environment or have already been arrested for committing crimes. Within the boundaries of prison policy, PRONASCI promises to fund 41,000 new prison spots for males, with a series of jails to be built especially for youngsters from 18 to 24 years old. The Ministry considers that 'with those units it will be possible to separate inmates by age and by criminal records. This will avoid the contact between youngsters who have committed small crimes with highly-dangerous criminals or leaders of criminal gangs. All the prisons will be equipped with units for healthcare and education (classrooms, computing rooms and libraries)'.³¹ The programme also conveys 5,400 new prison spots for females to be also built by 2011. These buildings will have special sections for pregnant women, intimate visits, toy-libs and classrooms.

There can be no doubt about the convergence between these principles and programmes of PRONASCI and the dream of an alternative prison policy in Brazil. But, as an influential anthropologist who has thoroughly studied public security in the country argues, PRONASCI brings 'reasons for optimism and caution' (Soares 2007). Indeed, since the programme was launched neither policy conversations similar to the 'Educating for Freedom' project have happened, nor the 'Educating for Freedom' project itself was boosted. The tricky result is that in the name of changes PRONASCI may attain an astonishing continuity in the history of Brazilian prison policy, focusing on constructing new jail buildings without placing any other political, technical or financial investments to make the buildings operate as humane places. The challenge of PRONASCI is, therefore, the challenge of going beyond cosmetic changes and what Soares called 'sometimes evasive and pure rhetoric'.³²

This takes me to the last point in this paper: What perhaps has been the most important point in the history of the 'Educating for Freedom' project is its capacity for mobilisation at both the domestic and the international level. At the domestic level, the seminars created a fabulous network of state officials and civil society activists who have been sustaining the dream as such.³³ The 2nd National Seminar gives an important example. Whilst the agenda of social reintegration was shrinking in DEPEN, the participants had it clear that 'the effectiveness of education in prison depends upon the restructuring of the penal execution from the perspective of the enforcement of rights and the reduction of inmates' vulnerabilities leading, almost automatically, to an alternative meaning for prison management'.³⁴ One of the possible ways towards that end was to link education and labour, which means nothing but to call new dreamers to dream the dream.³⁵

At the international level, the project has made a major connection. In March 2008 Brazil hosted a regional meeting in preparation for the broader Conference, and the policy experience of the 'Educating for Freedom' project was again in evidence. The other connection is with RedLECE – a Latin American Network for Education in Prisons funded by the European Union, which was launched during the 3rd Mercosur Educational Forum in Belo Horizonte.³⁶ RedLECE was originally proposed by SECAD as a site for Latin American and European countries to exchange practices and thoughts on education in prison. Above all, this initiative also keeps the policy issue on the table, demanding a considerable level of attention from the federal government. Whether the given attention will be enough to move the topic towards the centre of the prison policy agenda, this is really an open-ended question.

Then again, one could ask: does the building of networks mean winning or losing? I would argue that it means winning just by what it teaches us about making policy in Brazil. It teaches, indeed, that although the enforcement of 'rights' heavily relies in the commitment of public officials in the country, groups and organisations who seek to advance rights-based policy agendas do not need to wait until the right person steps into the office. They can rather act to create social, institutional, and political constraints to whoever is in the office. To be sure, this is a complicate task, which requires the ability to navigate across different policy domains and use different policy strategies. But in the drifting terrain of prison policy, it is perhaps the only one we have.

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Notes

- 1 A previous but considerably different version of this paper (Sa e Silva 2006) was published in Portuguese, Spanish and English by UNESCO, the Brazilian Ministries of Education and Justice and the Japanese Government. The English version is available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001495/149515E.pdf>

- 2 With respect to the right to education, it is important to mention: The Brazilian Federal Constitution (Article 208), Law no. 9.394/96 (Bases and Directives for Education – article. 37 § 1.º), CEB Technical Opinion no. 11/2000, Law no. 10.172/2001 (National Education Plan), Law no. 7.210/84 (Law of Penal Execution), and CNPCP Resolution no. 14/94 (Basic Regulations for the Treatment of Prisoners)
- 3 For some details about this project, see www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/rel/icps/brazil.html.
- 4 For similar understandings of rights and their political potential, *see* Stone (2002); *see also* Scheingold (2004).
- 5 See HC 82.959-7/SP194, available at: www.stf.gov.br.
- 6 See Rosenberg (1991).
- 7 See, for example, Kim (2005) and Garcia (2004).
- 8 See Oliveira (1999).
- 9 More recently a federal prison system has been established, but it is reserved to inmates who cannot be kept under State custody, which normally happens when the inmate is involved with local networks of organised crime.
- 10 For more information about the toy-libis distribution and PRONASCI, see www.mj.gov.br/pronasci.
- 11 For the roots of this idea of ‘problem definition’ as a narrative process, *see* Stone (2002 and 1999).
- 12 A major newspaper in Brazil had access to this report and made its main points available to the general public, and subsequently the entire document was published (Brazil, 2005). Curiously, in the version currently available online, Part 1 is suppressed. That was exactly the excerpt that endorsed the beliefs of critical criminology.
- 13 Among the main authors influencing DEPEN officials at the time were Baratta (1999), Sa (2003 and 2005) and Zaffaroni (1998).
- 14 *See* more information about SECAD at < www.mec.gov.br/secad >
- 15 Among the most compelling points of this global agenda were the deliberations of the V International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), which urged: ‘Providing prison inmates with

information on and access to different levels of education and qualification; Developing and implementing comprehensive education programmes in prisons, with the participation of inmates, to meet their needs and learning aspirations; Facilitating the educative activities undertaken in the prisons by nongovernmental organizations, teachers and other educators, thereby guaranteeing prison populations access to educational institutions and encouraging initiatives that link courses carried out inside and outside prisons’.

- 16 The preamble to ‘World Declaration on Education for All’ clearly states that: ‘Every, child, youth and adult has the human right to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term, an education that includes learning to acquire knowledge, learning skills, learning to live together, and learning to be. An education directed at valuing the talents and potential of all individuals and developing their personalities in such a way that they may improve their lives and transform their societies.’ The third and fourth objectives of its corresponding ‘Dakar Framework for Action’ targets ‘Promoting Youth and Adult Education’ and ‘Reducing Illiteracy’.
- 17 UNESCO is the leading agency for the Decade (2003–2012) in the United Nations System, and its Literacy for Empowerment program (LIFE) stresses exactly the relationship between literacy training and empowerment of individuals and communities.
- 18 Promoting a Culture of Peace was established as a target by UNESCO at its International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men (Ivory Coast, 1989) and subsequently consolidated in the Declaration and Action Program for a Culture of Peace. If considered as part of a broader agenda for social reintegration, education in prison contributes to promoting a culture of peace.
- 19 See Yunes (2003).
- 20 Internationally, the Brazilian debates on ‘popular education’ became known through the works of Paulo Freire, especially his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
- 21 The term ‘generating’ is used here in the same way as Paulo Freire used it when speaking of ‘generating words’: things from learner’s daily life from which he or she can develop the capacity of reading not words but the world.
- 22 Both the Theatre of the Oppressed and the Theatre-Forum technique are internationally recognised. While I was writing this paper, I was very glad to learn that Augusto Boal, its founder, was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. For general information about these topics, see www.theatreoftheoppressed.org.

- 23 See details at: www.ctorio.org.br/PRISOES.htm
- 24 The process has been partially documented by the NGO 'Observatório de Favelas', from Rio de Janeiro, in a video that was shown during a National Seminar in Brasília.
- 25 There were slight differences in the scope of the 2nd National Seminar, as I will later explain.
- 26 The 'Literate Brazil Program' was launched by the federal government in 2003 in order to rigorously enforce the right to education. Its main object is to provide effective literacy training (reading, writing, oral expression and mathematics) to youngsters and adults who have not had access to it, by means of partnerships with state and municipal governments and, to a minor extent, with NGOs, public universities and the private sector. In those partnerships, the federal government funds the work and the training of literacy trainers at the rate of US\$100.00/month. As for the special rewards to education in prison I just mentioned, it is worth noting that the FNDE Resolution n. 45/2007 gives literacy trainers working in prison US\$15.00/month more than given to literacy trainers working in regular settings.
- 27 See DEPEN (2004 and 2005) and SECAD (2005 and 2006). For all those accomplishments, the Federal Court of Accounts considered the project as one of the few good practices in Brazilian prison policy (Process no. 000.070/2006-4).
- 28 See information available at www.camara.gov.br/sileg/Prop_Detalhe.asp?id=266055
- 29 I borrow this expression from Kingdon (1995) although I do not use it in the exactly same way he does. For Kingdon, a policy window is open when 'policy entrepreneurs' put together the streams of problem, policy and politics. In the case of the 'Educating for Freedom' project, there are no clear 'policy entrepreneurs' on the stage, since the policy strategy has more collective contours. There is, nevertheless, a 'problem' defined, a 'policy solution' conceived and a 'political coalition' articulated.
- 30 See information available at www.mj.gov.br/pronasci
- 31 See information available at www.mj.gov.br/pronasci
- 32 I made a similar statement right after PRONASCI was launched (Sa e Silva, 2007).

- 33 Stone et al. (1999) and Henig et al. (2001) use the expression 'civic capacity' to describe the situations in which social coalitions appear as the only mechanism capable of sustaining systemic education reforms. In this case, the mobilisation has even a more precious meaning. More than a force that sustain reforms, it is the force that pushes for reforms that otherwise would not even be cogitated.
- 34 See 2nd Seminário de Articulação Regional e Consolidação de Diretrizes para a Educação no Sistema Penitenciário (2008).
- 35 Indeed, the final report from the Seminar urged that 'a partnership between the Ministries of Education, Justice, and Labour and Employment be set, preferably formalized by a joint-decree'.
- 36 See www.redlece.org

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