

## History, Reforms, Challenges and Perspectives: the past and present of Sociology Teaching in Brazil

### Abstract

This article addresses the paths of sociology teaching in Brazil, highlighting the curricular and political disputes that shaped its course throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Investigating the past, the text explores the origins of the discipline in the Brazilian educational context and the challenges faced in its implementation. It then analyzes recent transformations, considering educational policies and their implications. Its objective is to draw a historical and contemporary overview of the discipline and to offer paths for reflection on the debates around the presence of Sociology in the Brazilian school curriculum, highlighting its role in educational reforms, in the political struggle and in Brazilian education in a broader way.

**Keywords:** sociology teaching, university education, school, political struggle.

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### Introduction

Discuss or debate the History of Sociology Teaching in Brazil is an arduous task, as there are multiple constraints to be considered, given the relevance of the theme in Brazilian schools and universities, the longevity of the discussion and the various possible paths of analysis and recovery of this debate.

To give an initial idea, proposals for the inclusion of Sociology as a discipline in Brazilian educational systems date back to the late nineteenth century (Bodart &

Cigales, 2021). However, only in 1925, with the Rocha Vaz Educational Reform<sup>1</sup>, the discipline was included in Secondary Education and in the Normal Schools of Recife and Rio de Janeiro<sup>2</sup>, in this same year it is also introduced in the curriculum of Colégio Pedro II<sup>3</sup>, initiating a process of nationalization. In the Francisco Campos reform of 1931<sup>4</sup>, it remains, and is withdrawn in 1942 by the Gustavo Capanema reform<sup>5</sup>, returns in 2008<sup>6</sup> by virtue of the Law No. 11,684 and today suffers from the instabilities arising from the conjuncture of the Brazilian national crisis.

This fast historical recovery of the trajectory of the discipline shows us that we are, therefore, almost a century after the effective entry of the discipline into Brazilian education. However, apart from specific periods in the history of the Social Sciences in Brazil, the teaching of sociology in the schools constituted a hidden scientific object, with few debates and relative invisibility at least until the 2000s.

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<sup>1</sup> Brazil. (1925). Decree No. 16,782-A, of January 13, 1925. It establishes the Union's competition for the diffusion of primary education, organizes the National Department of Education, reforms secondary education and makes other provisions. Retrieved from <https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/decret/1920-1929/decreto-16782-a-13-janeiro-1925-517461-publicacaooriginal-1-pe.html>

<sup>2</sup> Normal Schools in Brazil are institutions established in the 19th century with the aim of training teachers for act on primary education. These schools played a crucial role in the early professionalization and appreciation of the teaching profession. They followed european models and contributed to the standardization and improvement of the quality of basic education in the country. Over the years, the Normal Schools underwent several reforms, reflecting changes in Brazilian educational policies, until they were replaced in large scale by higher education courses in pedagogy and teaching degrees starting in the second half of the 20th century.

<sup>3</sup> Colégio Pedro II, founded in 1837 in Rio de Janeiro, is one of the most traditional educational institutions in Brazil. Established to provide an excellent education and to train the intellectual and political elite of the country, it has become a benchmark for the quality of secondary education. Throughout its history, the school has played a central role in the training of teachers and the dissemination of innovative pedagogical practices. Its importance lies not only in student education but also in its influence on Brazilian educational and curricular policies.

<sup>4</sup> Brazil. (1931). Decree No. 19,890, of April 18, 1931. Provides for the organization of secondary education. Retrieved from <https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/decret/1930-1939/decreto-19890-18-abril-1931-504631-publicacaooriginal-141245-pe.html>

<sup>5</sup> Brazil. (1942). Decree-Law No. 4,244, of April 9, 1942. Organic Law on Secondary Education. Retrieved from <https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/declei/1940-1949/decreto-lei-4244-9-abril-1942-414155-publicacaooriginal-1-pe.html>

<sup>6</sup> Brazil. (2008). Law No. 11,684, of June 2, 2008. Amends article 36 of Law No. 9,394, of December 20, 1996, which establishes the guidelines and bases of national education, to include Philosophy and Sociology as mandatory subjects in high school curricula. Recovered from [https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/ato2007-2010/2008/lei/11684.htm](https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/ato2007-2010/2008/lei/11684.htm). It should be noted that the discipline returned definitively in 2008 by the force of this federal law, however this return was already taking place gradually in the states of the federation by virtue, in some cases, of state laws. In 2008, it was already present in practically all states, becoming mandatory by federal law (Bodart, Azevedo & Tavares, 2020).

This phenomenon certainly had implications that have not yet been evaluated in studies on Sociology in Brazil. Above all, because the interpretations about the emergence of the discipline in the country were initially made from biases that privileged the academic and/or scientific history of the discipline (Miceli, 1989). This perspective ended up marginalizing those productions that would have been generated outside of these standards and logics.

In this sense, the field of research in the Teaching of Sociology itself has been responsible, especially since the return to the school benches in 2008, for initiating a renewed process of investigation of the process of institutionalization of the discipline. This resumption takes place primarily through the consideration and analysis of the production before the "cut" between the "pre-scientific" period and the "scientific" period of the discipline, bringing to the center of the debate the reflection on the production of sociological ideas - even those that were not produced in the academic environment - advancing to research about questions that deals with the contemporary issues related to the discipline.

As mentioned above, school sociology in Brazil was born under the crisis of the Primeira República<sup>7</sup>, a period of criticism of the federative agreement of the Constitution of 1891 and was 'nationalized'<sup>8</sup> in the school in the period 1925-1942, part of this period under the dictatorship of the Estado Novo<sup>9</sup>.

Thus, we believe that we have two explanatory lines of the History of Sociology Teaching in Brazil: the first is that even though the discipline has left the curriculum in 1942, due to the Capanema Reform, the same content that was taught reappears

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<sup>7</sup> The Primeira República ("The First Republic") is the period in the history of Brazil that took place from 1889 to 1930, having begun with the Proclamation of the Republic that took place on November 15, 1889 and ended with the deposition of Washington Luís as a consequence of the Revolution of 1930.

<sup>8</sup> We put 'nationalized' in quotation marks, because we cannot consider Brazilian education as broadly national in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Almost a third of the secondary schools, for example, were concentrated in São Paulo (Romanelli, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> The Estado Novo ("Brazilian New State") in Brazil was a period of political authoritarianism that lasted from 1937 to 1945, under the government of Getúlio Vargas. Established through a coup d'état, it was characterized by political centralism, suppression of civil rights, and repression of opponents. Vargas concentrated powers, ruling by decree-laws. The period ended with the end of World War II and the pressure for redemocratization, culminating in the departure of Vargas in 1945.

inserted in the school in the 1950s and 1970s under the name of other disciplines<sup>10</sup>. In this sense, we could break with the discourse, sometimes present in the debates on the Teaching of Sociology, which assert that the discipline has not been part of the school curriculum since the 1940s only because a long period of absence of democratic institutions.

It seems to us that Sociology was not, until its departure from the school curriculum, a school discipline committed to democratic, or even progressive, values (Lima, 2020; Meucci, 2011). The teaching of Sociology at the time was marked by a strong positivist influence and the discipline was understood as an efficient instrument for the analysis and understanding of society (Machado, 1987), which remains with the disciplines taught in its place from 1942 onwards. As a result, what would have been modified, in fact, would have been only the name of the discipline<sup>11</sup>.

This explanatory line is intimately related to the second, since we believe that from the beginning of the 1980s - with the political reopening<sup>12</sup> and with the experience and accumulation of academic debates held in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s - there was the beginning of the gestation of a new meaning for the teaching of Sociology. Although it is difficult to capture this in retrospect in everyday school practice, it seems evident to us that there was a movement that aimed to move school sociology away from its normative and conservative sense, present in the first decades of the twentieth century<sup>13</sup>.

Thus, we propose that there was - still in the twentieth century - a break with the historical trajectory of the discipline that will be decisive for the characteristics that it

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<sup>10</sup> Among which: “Social Studies”, “Moral and Civic Studies”, “Social and Political Organization of Brazil Studies” and “Studies of Brazilian Problems”. It is worth pointing out, in this sense, that the training of Sociology teachers has been continuous since the 1930s, which has made it possible for some of these professionals to continue to work, now with the teaching of these disciplines in school.

<sup>11</sup> This is a complex issue, since it is not the theme or the contribution itself to the analysis of social reality that denotes the specificity of the presence or not of the discipline in the curriculum: what we can affirm is that the Social Sciences influenced other disciplines but did not take their place or become them. Or, since many teachers of History, Geography and Social Studies were graduates in Social Sciences, the *ethos* of social scientist appeared, to some extent, in their classes.

<sup>12</sup> The political opening was the process of leaving the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil between 1964 and 1985. This process began in 1974, still under the dictatorship itself, and ended in 1988 with the promulgation of the new Constitution.

<sup>13</sup> The reading of the above-mentioned conjuncture can also be observed in the examination of textbooks released in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, which have different theoretical and thematic aspects from the books of the first half of the twentieth century.

assumes from the return of Sociology as a mandatory component throughout the country in 2008, as well as in the return to state curricula still in the 1980s, and that has repercussions in the struggle for its permanence in the curriculum from 2016 onwards.

In the diverse scientific production on the Teaching of Sociology, a tradition seems to be common to most works on the history of the discipline: the observation and reaffirmation of the intermittency of the teaching of the discipline and its impacts. We will try, however, to distance ourselves from this perspective, and we will do so not because we consider it irrelevant, but because it seems to us to be little explanatory for what we will undertake in this text. Because of this, we propose a recovery of the trajectory of the discipline that has already begun in the debates from the 1940s, because we believe in a clipping of this history that privileges the capture of the ideas and imaginaries present in the sociological production and performance of those who thought about the Teaching of Sociology.

We divided our analysis into three periods: **1. from 1942 to 1987**, when the discipline is no longer mandatory in the official curricula, but debates about its reinsertion begin<sup>14</sup>; **2. From 1988 to 2007**, with the 1988 Constituent Assembly and the resumption of democracy, there is gradually the gradual reinsertion of the discipline in high school through state initiatives<sup>15</sup>; and national reintegration and its impacts; **3. 2008 to current challenges**, a period in which the discipline was finally included as mandatory in the high school curriculum - which leads to several advances - but later has its insertion changed by the reform of high school, which today is responsible for instabilities in the offer of the discipline and makes the teaching work and student learning insecure.

### **1942 to 1987: The extinction of the obligation and gestation of another meaning for the Teaching of Sociology**

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<sup>14</sup> We chose to cut this period as one of absence, but it is worth noting that this absence was not total. São Paulo and other states had already included the discipline in their curricula before 1987. See Cravo's dissertation (2014) on this periodization. In 1985, Ianni ([1985], 2011) discussed a possible curriculum for the state of São Paulo.

<sup>15</sup> During this period, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education, Law No. 9394/96 was enacted, which establishes in its article 36, paragraph 1, item III that: "*at the end of high school, the student demonstrates: mastery of knowledge of philosophy and sociology necessary for the exercise of citizenship*", but does not establish the creation of a school discipline for such purposes.

*1942 to 1953 – Capanema reform and debate in the 1940s and 1950s*

The 1930s are considered fruitful in the Social Sciences, since it was in this decade that the debates on the Teaching of Sociology began, motivated, among others, by the intense bibliographic production, including manuals dedicated to secondary education, the Revista *Sociologia*<sup>16</sup>, the publication of the classic works of the so-called "interpreters" of Brazil, and by the fact that the discipline had occupied a central place in the country at that time which articulated three ideals/goals: reach scientific standards, modernity and progress with education.

Although the debate on the Teaching of Sociology flourished in the 1930s, we believe that it acquired a new meaning in the 1940s, because the decade began with a strong blow. In 1942, the Gustavo Capanema reform excluded Sociology from schools, restricting it to Normal Schools and the first undergraduate courses in Social Sciences created in the 1930s.

This removal of Sociology from the school curriculum, as Schwartzman (2000) makes evident, represents the successful pact between the Ministry of Education and the Catholic Church. Practices such as those proposed by the Escola Nova movement<sup>17</sup> - gestated in the 1930s - of teaching aimed at the autonomous construction of students should be rejected, and this included the Teaching of Sociology: if this did not serve to maintain the current order or proposed a change in it, it should be hidden. On the other hand, Costa Pinto and Carneiro ([1955], 2012) point out that the withdrawal occurred precisely because Sociology did not dialogue with students and their realities, being too theoretical. Since the Escola Nova movement advocated a more meaningful education, Sociology did not serve this purpose.

The withdrawal of Sociology from school was, therefore, the object of intense reflection and debate that involved the first group of specialized social scientists of

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<sup>16</sup> Founded in 1939, the Revista Sociologia ("The Journal of Sociology") established itself as a platform for disseminating theories and research in the Social Sciences, being the first and, for a long time, the most enduring periodical in the field in Brazil.

<sup>17</sup> The Movimento da Escola Nova ("New School Movement"), which gained momentum in Brazil in the early decades of the 20th century, sought to reform the educational system through progressive, student-centered principles. Inspired by European and American educational theories, it emphasized the importance of active learning, student individuality, and the integration of school and society. The movement promoted significant changes in curriculum, teaching methods, and teacher training, leaving a legacy in Brazilian education.

the country, for their return to the school space. Before we go into these discussions, it is important to point out that, in this period, a "missionary" role was conferred on the sciences in general and on Sociology specifically.

Sociology in this context appears as a way of rationally interpreting/understanding history and helping the Brazilian rupture with its past. Its teaching, in secondary schools, was seen as an instrument to raise the intellectual level of the great masses and an effective instrument of social change and democratization of Brazilian society, as it would produce answers to existing social problems (Fernandes, [1954], 1976). The debate about the Teaching of Sociology was inscribed in a political objective of social reform and democratization of Brazilian society, based on the role of scientific knowledge. This is evident in the debates held in the 1940s and 1950s, although these only took place after the end of the Estado Novo and Capanema's departure from the Ministry of Education<sup>18</sup>.

It is also worth remembering that the Teaching of Sociology was also the subject of debate in the 1950s, with the holding of the First Brazilian Congress of Sociology in 1954. A milestone is the communication by Florestan Fernandes in which the author proposed a sociological analysis of the possibilities of reintroducing sociology in Brazilian secondary education, starting from the evaluation of the position of secondary education in the educational system, considering this system in relation to the sociocultural conditions that support it, and finally analyzing the effects of the introduction of a "new" discipline in this context.

Brazilian secondary education in the 1950s is defined by him as a type of *static education* that aims solely the preservation of social order, unable to "become a conscious instrument of social progress" or a "dynamic education" (Fernandes, [1954], 1976, p. 98). For Fernandes, in this static educational system, the Social Sciences cannot play any role, a fact that the author regrets considering the conditions of formation of Brazilian society, the process of democratization of education with the

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<sup>18</sup> The post-Capanema reform context represented a setback in the development of school sociology, as the attraction of the course/diploma deprived of one of its main professional meanings diminished (Pinto, Carneiro [1955], 2012). The majority of those who sought courses in the Social Sciences sought to apply for secondary teaching and it did not make sense – in an environment in which the job market was so restricted – that a university course existed as an isolated effort for the training of high-level technicians and researchers in the Social Sciences.

expansion of access to school, the disaggregation of the slave order, the establishment of democracy, the formation of social classes and political parties.

In the face of all these social changes, the school was not given any constructive role in the formation of the civic consciousness of the citizens and Fernandes defends the legitimacy of the Teaching of Sociology in secondary school, contributing precisely to the "formation of civic attitudes and to the constitution of a political consciousness defined around the understanding of the rights and duties of citizens" (Fernandes, [1954], 1977, p.103). We can say that Florestan Fernandes was concerned with the reform of the Brazilian educational system and had a very clear notion of the role that Sociology could play in this context.

### *1954 to 1987 – Withdrawal of discipline from school and absence of debates*

Sociology, despite having left the secondary school curriculum in 1942<sup>19</sup>, built from the 1940s onwards a respected place in academia. The impact of the withdrawal of Sociology from secondary courses required a new redirection and accelerated changes in academic courses, which had previously been particularly focused on the preparation of teachers rather than researchers per se.

The performance of authoritarian regimes was fundamental for this redirection; however, it seems something yet necessary to reflect on the role of the Teaching of Sociology in them. We recall that the meaning attributed to the Teaching of Sociology that apparently emerged victorious in the debates in the 1930s and 1940s was the one linked to Sociology connected to authoritarian regimes and conservative sociological theories.

Obviously, authoritarian regimes have enormous explanatory weight when we think that the discipline leaves the curriculum in the Estado Novo and remains outside the curriculum throughout the military dictatorship<sup>20</sup> and that these regimes

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<sup>19</sup> We emphasize, once again, that the discipline has left the high school and the complementary courses for access to higher education but continued in Normal Schools (until the 1990s).

<sup>20</sup> The military dictatorship in Brazil refers to the period of authoritarianism that lasted from 1964 to 1985, after a coup d'état that deposed President João Goulart. It was characterized by the suppression of civil rights, censorship of the press, political persecution, and multiple human rights



persecuted those or any initiative that was contrary to their conceptions. But we wonder, in curricular terms, if the withdrawal of that Sociology connected to conservative values had a relevant impact, although at first it represented a political victory for certain social groups.

In this sense, it is necessary to revisit the academic production after the university reform of 1968 because fundamental issues of the Brazilian reality, such as the racial and educational issues, social inequalities and the very role of intellectuals in Brazilian political life, gained ground and resulted in scientific research of great scope. These researches that address Brazilian issues will help foster the debate on the Teaching of Sociology during and after the civil-military dictatorship.

A paradox is then formed, at the same time that Sociology and its intellectuals distance themselves from the public debate on the insertion of the discipline in the school (and from the school itself, in a certain sense) and from the Teaching of School Sociology, the research and debates carried out in the academic space end up feeding back the struggles for the reinsertion of the discipline in the curriculum. This is because in the 1960s and 1970s, the Sociology practiced in Brazil turned to the study of themes related to the working classes, such as wages and working hours, in addition to being concerned with the process of industrialization of the country, with issues related to agrarian reform and social movements (in the city and in the countryside), and focus on the major socioeconomic and political issues in Brazil – notably the confrontation of inequalities and the struggle for rights – have gained ground in sociological research (Perruso, 2009).

### **1988 to 2007: Gradual reintegration into secondary/secondary education through state initiatives: estrangement and denaturalization**

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violations. Military governments imposed themselves by basically controlling the executive, legislative and judicial powers, marked by arbitrary interventions and repression of social and political movements. The period also witnessed an economic boom, but at the expense of wealth concentration and social inequality. Redemocratization began in the 1980s, culminating in the election of Tancredo Neves in 1985 and the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, ending the military regime.

The 1980s represented a renewal of the debate about the Teaching of Sociology. The discipline is gradually reintroduced through specific initiatives in some states of the federation, with the outstanding performance of various sectors of civil society that organized movements in favor of the reinsertion of Sociology in schools in line with the process of redemocratization of the country. In this decade, the debate has definitely taken other contours. The very reinsertion of the discipline in the state curricula (such as Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo)<sup>21</sup> boosts the national struggle for the adoption of the discipline.

In the field of meanings attributed to the discipline, we found a significant change: while the previous debate took place publicly and was based on moral and civic issues of the Brazilian educational and political reality; the debate of the 1980s yearned for public recognition and held as a kind of "ace up its sleeve": the great accumulation of scientific research on the country.

In addition to the knowledge acquired in research, we found a significant change in meanings. In the 1980s, Sociology acquired a meaning that relates and guides its content and the training of its students to the struggle to obtain rights in the democracy. The argument starts to focus on the idea that contents related to the Brazilian reality have been systematically denied to secondary students and that this would limit their reflection and ability to interfere and transform this conjuncture (Carvalho, 2004).

The groups fighting for the reinsertion of the discipline in the 1980s were the first intellectuals and militants who were able to openly question the conceptions of school Sociology as thought by Catholic sociology and in the post-military dictatorship. Taking a temporal leap, the articulation of the groups that emerged from the struggle of the 1980s were fundamental for the approval of the Bill of Law,

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<sup>21</sup> Although this process had begun earlier, as we have highlighted, the promulgation of the constitutions of the states in 1989 was fundamental to give more impetus to the struggle, since they made the introduction of the discipline by the states of the federation autonomous. Although we found that in later years there were attempts to circumvent the legislation, with the discipline resembling a weekly class only and being taught by professionals not trained in the Social Sciences.

PLC No. 9/2000<sup>22</sup>, authored by Deputy Padre Roque (PT-PR), in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate in 2001.

The Bill was later vetoed by the then president (and sociologist) Fernando Henrique Cardoso<sup>23</sup>. We do not intend to dwell at this point on the justifications for the presidential veto, but criticism fell on the president of the republic, again centered on the idea that the student was being denied, now on purpose, access to the possibility of reflecting with full instruments on the Brazilian reality. As evidenced by Lejeune Carvalho:

"Personally, I have always been among those who never had the slightest illusion about Cardoso's position. A neoliberal government, which deepened the abyss between the poor and the rich in its years of government, which deeply implanted the exclusionary neoliberal model in the country, with savage and irresponsible privatizations, whose legislative support base has always been with the right-wing parties, which has always done what the IMF and the World Bank have determined, couldn't approve a law that would bring our youth more opportunities for political, social and philosophical awareness." (Carvalho, 2004, p. 28 – translated to English by the author)<sup>24</sup>.

In this period, the knowledge produced by Sociology has been defended as necessary for the exercise of citizenship, and there is an expressive association - made by legislation and ministerial documents - of sociological knowledge at this level of education, on the one hand, for the formation of citizenship, and on the other, for the ability to provoke the "denaturalization" and "estrangement" of social phenomena (Moraes, 2009).

This official discourse strongly impacts the conception of Sociology disseminated to the school universe, and it is recurrent to find, both in teaching practice and in textbooks, the justifications attributed to sociological knowledge and its validity for basic education, listed in the Curricular Guidelines for High School (BRASIL, 2006)<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Brazil. (2000). House Bill No. 9 of 2000. Amends article 36 of Law No. 9394, of December 20, 1996, which establishes the guidelines and bases of national education. Retrieved from <https://www25.senado.leg.br/web/atividade/materias/-/materia/43730>

<sup>23</sup> The government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso in Brazil, between 1995 and 2002, was marked by a political orientation centered on social-democratic ideas. As president, Cardoso promoted neoliberal economic policies aimed at stabilizing the currency, through the Real Plan, and opening the economy to foreign capital, with privatizations of state-owned companies.

<sup>24</sup> It should also be noted that when the federal law was passed, almost all (if not all) states already offered Sociology in high school, but in a limited to a few schools. The law guaranteed the expansion for all.

<sup>25</sup> Brazil. (2006). Human sciences and their technologies. Department of Basic Education. Brasília: Ministry of Education, Secretariat of Basic Education. (Curriculum Guidelines for High School; volume 3). Retrieved from [http://portal.mec.gov.br/seb/arquivos/pdf/book\\_volume\\_03\\_internet.pdf](http://portal.mec.gov.br/seb/arquivos/pdf/book_volume_03_internet.pdf)

Another meaning often attributed to the Teaching of Sociology, in the twenty-first century, refers to its ability to develop the "sociological imagination" of students in the sense of the term disseminated by the homonymous book by Wright Mills (1972).

The ideas of "denaturalization", "estrangement" and "sociological imagination" are, therefore, intimately related to the idea that Sociology can be a kind of "compass" for the student for critical knowledge of the Brazilian social conjuncture.

### **2008 to the present day: reintegration and reform**

Based on the struggle of the previous two decades, Law No. 11,684 of June 2, 2008 was finally enacted, which establishes the guidelines and bases of national education, to include Philosophy and Sociology as mandatory subjects in high school curricula.

It is worth noting that it is not possible to understand this process of approval of Sociology and Philosophy in basic education without also referring to the broader dynamics related to educational policy in Brazil in this period. We were living in a democratic period from 1988 onwards in which – through various struggles – it was possible to expand basic education and higher education<sup>26</sup>, which also allowed for curricular advances<sup>27</sup>.

This scenario strongly impacts the development of Sociology Teaching both in the school space with new teacher jobs in the states and federation, strengthening of professional associations, need for Sociology textbooks, increase of teaching strategies, insertion of the discipline in the daily school curricular dispute, among others; as well as in the academic space with the increase of the Working Groups of Teaching Sociology in the principles of national meetings of research in the area (of the Brazilian Society of Sociology and the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Social Sciences), the creation of the National Meeting for the Teaching of Sociology in Basic Education (Eneseb), the creation of the Brazilian

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<sup>26</sup> Constitutional Amendment No. 59/2009 included secondary education in the basic education stage, making its provision mandatory by the states of the federation, for example.

<sup>27</sup> Advances such as: the inclusion in 2003 of the contents related to African and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture in the curriculum; in 2005, the mandatory provision of Spanish as a foreign language; in 2008, the mandatory content related to Music and Indigenous History and Culture.

Association of Teaching of Social Sciences (Abecs) and its national congress, creation of academic journals and publications on the subject, in addition to the growth of academic research in its most varied facets and interfaces.

In this sense, we can highlight the period that begins in 2008 and runs until 2016<sup>28</sup> as an especially virtuous period of the discipline in school and of the Teaching of Sociology as an area of research and scientific object. However, on the other hand, it should be noted that the Brazilian conjuncture since 2013 has been bumpy, to say the least, for the discipline.

This is because in June 2013, Brazil experienced a wave of protests that began as a demand for better public transport conditions and later expanded to other social demands, such as access to health, education and public safety. These protests were marked by a strong presence on social networks and with the initial spontaneous mobilization of young people<sup>29</sup>.

Some analysts argue that these demonstrations were the harbinger of the 2016 parliamentary coup, as they called into question the legitimacy of the government of then-President Dilma Rousseff<sup>30</sup> and contributed to a sense of widespread dissatisfaction among the population. The fact is that a conservative government led by Michel Temer rises to power within a period marked by political polarization that

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<sup>28</sup> This period encompasses the first two governments of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil, from 2003 to 2010, that were marked by a center-left political orientation. Lula prioritized social policies aimed at reducing social inequality, implementing economic inclusion programs and income distribution policies. At the international level, it sought greater integration and cooperation with developing countries.

<sup>29</sup> June 2013 in Brazil was a period of intense protests in several cities of the country, initially motivated by the increase in public transport fares in some capitals, such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. However, the protests quickly evolved into a broad protest against corruption, the poor quality of public services, the lack of investment in areas such as health and education, and dissatisfaction with the political class in general. The protests were marked by a wide diversity of demands, participants and political orientations, including youth, workers, social movements and students. June 2013 was a milestone in Brazil's recent political history, indicating growing popular dissatisfaction and influencing the political and social debate in the country in the following years.

<sup>30</sup> Dilma Rousseff's government was characterized by a center-left political orientation. During his terms in office, he prioritized social and inclusion policies like his predecessor. The end of his government was marked by an impeachment process, which began in 2016. The opposition claimed that she had committed crimes of fiscal responsibility, although there were questions about the legality and legitimacy of this process. However, the president was removed in May 2016 and her vice president, Michel Temer, took office. Michel Temer's 2016-2018 government, on the other hand, was characterized by a center-right political orientation. Temer, were implemented in the economy liberal policies, such as labor and social security reforms, in addition to the adoption of fiscal austerity measures. Michel Temer's government has faced low popularity and several accusations of corruption.

involved various sectors of Brazilian society, from politicians, businessmen and the media to social movements.

The relationship between the 2013 demonstrations and the 2016 coup is complex and multifaceted. However, it seems to us that there have been several changes in the country's educational policy, which have been implemented without due dialogue with civil society and the school and academic communities that have strongly impacted the Teaching of Sociology. One of these changes was the Secondary Education Reform, approved in 2017 and criticized by experts in the field of education because it did not consider the needs and demands of students and teachers.

In fact, without dialogue, the reform revoked the mandatory presence of Sociology in all years of high school, with the fall of Law No. 11,684, which made the presence of the discipline in the curricula unstable<sup>31</sup>. Even considering the training itineraries proposed by the reform, which include one related to the Human Sciences, there is still uncertainty about the role that will be played by the discipline. In some high school curricula currently spread throughout Brazil, for example, the workload of the discipline appears reduced, in others it has been replaced by curricular components such as "life project", among other cases that outline a process of precariousness of its offer.

In the recent historical scenario, the Teaching of Sociology in Brazil has continued to be the object of intense transformations and challenges, especially during the Jair Bolsonaro government<sup>32</sup>. Even before the beginning of his mandate,

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<sup>31</sup> Although the law was repealed, the mandatory studies and practices of Sociology were indicated in Article 3 § 2 of Law No. 13,415/2017: "the National Common Curricular Base referring to high school to

<sup>32</sup> Jair Bolsonaro's government, which began in January 2019, is marked by a far-right political orientation. Bolsonaro was elected on a conservative platform on human rights, social, economic and public security issues. His government implemented policies of environmental deregulation and flexibilization of labor laws. In addition, he adopted a confrontational stance with democratic institutions, frequently attacking the press, the judiciary and the organs of control. It was also marked by setbacks in several areas, notably the environmental policies that resulted in an increase in deforestation in the Amazon, the withdrawal of rights from minorities and vulnerable groups, and the negligence in confronting the COVID-19 pandemic. The management of the health crisis has been widely criticized, with the promotion of treatments without proven efficacy and a denialist approach to the severity of the disease. Public security policies have been questioned by escalating violence and police abuses and disrespect for human rights.

he expressed his contempt for the human sciences<sup>33</sup>, manifesting specific attacks on Sociology and other fields of knowledge.

In several speeches, the then-candidate expressed his skepticism regarding the usefulness of disciplines such as Sociology and Philosophy, questioning the relevance of these areas in the school curriculum and suggesting that their presence would contribute to a supposed ideological indoctrination - indicating a supposed preference for disciplines that were aligned with his political and ideological convictions, attested by his approach to movements such as Escola Sem Partido<sup>34</sup>. This stance raised concerns among educators and experts<sup>35</sup>, who feared direct interference in the content and approach of disciplines related to the humanities/social sciences.

This is because the then president, throughout his political career, directed attacks at teachers, accusing them of promoting alleged political indoctrination in classrooms. This rhetoric contributed to creating an environment of distrust towards educators, affecting pedagogical autonomy and freedom of professorship, and upon assuming the presidency<sup>36</sup>, Bolsonaro maintained his critical stance towards the

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<sup>33</sup> Under threat of cuts in Bolsonaro's government, courses in social sciences and humanities concentrate racial diversity. (2019, May 9). BBC News Brasil. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-48201426>

<sup>34</sup> The Escola Sem Partido ("School Without Party movement") is an initiative that supposedly sought to promote ideological neutrality in the school environment, arguing that educational institutions should abstain from any political, religious, or philosophical orientation. Advocating the elimination of alleged indoctrination and ideological bias on the part of educators, its proponents claim that the movement aims to guarantee freedom of thought and impartiality in the teaching process. However, Escola sem Partido limits the autonomy of teachers by restricting critical discussion and harming students' citizenship education by preventing them from addressing relevant and controversial topics. The emergence of this movement has generated debates in Brazil about academic freedom and the nature of teaching, highlighting the tension between the search for objectivity and the recognition of the diversity of perspectives in the educational environment. The relationship between Jair Bolsonaro and the Escola Sem Partido was marked by ideological alignments and convergent positions. The movement found an echo in the president's statements and actions, both before and during his term. This approach contributed to intense debates on freedom of expression and pedagogical autonomy, putting on the agenda the influence of the movement on the government's educational policies.

<sup>35</sup> Why do Philosophy and Sociology courses bother Bolsonaro? (2019, April 26). Carta Capital. Retrieved from <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/educacao/por-que-os-cursos-de-filosofia-e-sociologia-incomodam-bolsonaro/>

<sup>36</sup> It is important to highlight that social movements such as Professores Contra o Escola Sem Partido ("Teachers Against School Without Party" - <https://profscontraoesp.org>) have functioned as an organized response of educators who oppose the proposal of Escola Sem Partido. This movement argues that the initiative poses a threat to freedom of expression and pedagogical autonomy, claiming that absolute neutrality is impossible, and that the movement result in the censorship of

humanities/social sciences, reflected in policies that impacted the teaching of Sociology.

The biggest impact was the cuts in resources for education - which have been constant in recent years - which have directly affected the quality of education. This scarcity of resources has manifested itself in several ways: in the lack of investment in school infrastructure, in the lack of appreciation of teachers and education professionals, in addition to the decrease in student assistance policies. The absence of a clear and consistent policy for the area has generated insecurity and uncertainty.

The Covid-19 pandemic further aggravated the situation since with the closure of schools, where many students were left without access to education, which generated a series of losses for learning and exposed Brazilian educational inequalities. In Sociology, this impact was greatly felt, since the use of virtual learning media – and the difficulty of access them by public school students – compromised the time needed to discuss the proposed themes, considering that sociological knowledge implies a mutual construction that requires classes/meetings and dialogical activities, debates, questionings and a qualitative and quantitative process of intellectual maturation.

Even if we considered the classes of the discipline as predominantly expository (which, in fact, does not occur), the virtual media also prevent an adequate exposition of the themes with the precision and depth typical of high school education. In addition, didactic resources such as film screenings, seminar programming, debates, and teamwork were impaired/compromised.

## **Conclusion**

Summarizing, we realize that Sociology has several difficulties to overcome in the current conjuncture for the full development of the expected competencies: what will be done and what will be its role in the reform of secondary education, the lack

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teachers and the restriction of critical debate in the classroom. Proponents of this movement highlight the importance of pluralism of ideas and respect for diversity, arguing for the need to address controversial topics for a thorough and critical education.



of public funding for education, the absence of a national policy for the area and for the discipline, and, more recently, the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic.

From a political point of view, since the election of the third government of President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva in 2022<sup>37</sup>, for example, one of the expectations of civil society and various educational entities is the repeal of the High School Reform. However, to date, this repeal has not yet occurred, which has generated pressure from these same groups.

At the beginning of 2023, amid a recent wave of demonstrations against the reform, Camilo Santana, responsible for the Ministry of Education (MEC), published Ordinance No. 627/2023 in the Official Gazette<sup>38</sup>. The measure provided the suspension of the National Schedule for the Implementation of the High School Reform for 60 days. This ordinance also provided a process of public consultation with civil society about the secondary education, from which government proposals were formulated for changes in this stage of basic education.

The government's proposals included the recomposition of basic general education to 2,400 hours, except for technical courses; the reduction from 5 to 3 in the number of training itineraries and the maintenance of Enem<sup>39</sup> 2024 aimed at basic training. In addition, the formative itineraries are now called “paths of deepening” and “integration of studies”. These curricular components would encompass the following areas: languages, mathematics, natural sciences; humanities & social sciences and technical & vocational training. The Ministry of Education also advocated that subjects such as spanish, art, physical education, literature, history,

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<sup>37</sup> In 2022, Brazil witnessed a remarkable electoral process, characterized by intense political debates and broad participation of the population. The election resulted in the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to his third term as the country's president, marking his return to power after a 12-year gap since his last term. Lula's third term so far has been guided by measures aimed at resuming economic growth, inclusive social policies, and efforts to address emerging challenges, such as the global environmental crisis. This period has been closely followed by Brazilian society and the international community, with expectations and analyses on the country's political and economic directions.

<sup>38</sup> Brazil. Ministry of Education. (2023). MEC Ordinance No. 627, of April 04, 2023. Suspends the ongoing deadlines of MEC Ordinance No. 521, of July 13, 2021, which instituted the National Schedule for the Implementation of the New High School. Retrieved from <https://www.in.gov.br/en/web/dou/-/portaria-n-627-de-4-de-abril-de-2023-475187235>

<sup>39</sup> The National High School Exam (ENEM) is an annual assessment administered by the Brazilian Ministry of Education. Established in 1998, the exam aims to evaluate the academic performance of students at the end of high school and is widely used as a selection criterion for admission to public and private universities, as well as for scholarship and student financing programs. The ENEM also serves as a tool to assess the quality of high school education in the country.

sociology, philosophy, geography, chemistry, physics, biology and digital education should once again be included as mandatory in basic general education, in addition to asking for the prohibition of distance education in basic general training and for the use of up to 20% in the offer for Technical Professional Education to be authorized.

These proposals were delivered by the Federal Government to the National Congress through Bill 5,230/23<sup>40</sup>. This project, however, was delivered to the rapporteurship of federal deputy Mendonça Filho – who had been minister of education and directly responsible for the approval of the original project – and he presented his report still to be voted on. Among the changes is a new workload for mandatory and optional subjects, with the maintenance of the 3,000-hour high school workload (1,000 hours per year) stipulated in Law 13,415 of 2017 but changed its distribution between optional and mandatory subjects.

If the proposal had been approved in the manner presented by the rapporteur, students would have had 2,100 hours for mandatory subjects and 900 hours for electives disciplines (training itineraries chosen by the student). Mendonça's proposal increases the number of hours for mandatory subjects in relation to the current rule but is lower than what the Ministry of Education had suggested to the president. In addition, 300 hours of the mandatory workload must be dedicated to deepening the contents of the National Common Curricular Base directly related to the technical and professional training offered.

The text would also make it possible to offer technical courses of up to 1,200 hours, in an integrated way with regular high school. Another point is that schools will be able to offer other foreign languages, but they must prioritize spanish. The bill determines that the workload for basic general training is offered in person, but allows distance classes, mediated by technology, when necessary. According to the

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<sup>40</sup> Brazil. Chamber of Deputies. (2023). Bill PL 5230/2023. Amends Law No. 9,394, of December 20, 1996 (Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education), in order to define guidelines for secondary education, and Laws No. 14,818, of January 16, 2024, 12,711, of August 29, 2012, and 11,096, of January 13, 2005. Retrieved from <https://www.camara.leg.br/propostas-legislativas/2399598>

text, remote classes consider the specificities of Brazilian regions, to facilitate access to education for indigenous, rural and quilombola<sup>41</sup> youth and adults

Several entities criticized the new document, which would be voted on and approved in 2023, pointing out its flaws and mistakes, the document was withdrawn of the voting agenda of the Chamber of Deputies, to enable more in-depth discussion in the year 2024<sup>42</sup>. With regard to the debate on the Teaching of Sociology, it is up to us that the discipline appears as a mandatory component in the report, however, although the project mentions, in a generic way, the curricular components, it is necessary to make the teaching of the disciplines mandatory, assigning them a minimum workload in all schools. This is because the way it appears in the document, the measure encourages an unequal supply of curricular components between education networks. A historical problem of the Teaching of Sociology, which, when offered, appears with a reduced workload and in precarious conditions in the teaching networks.

The text, despite the clashes between the government and the rapporteur, was approved on March 20, 2024 with 2,400 hours of classes required for basic training and 600 hours for the so-called "training itinerary", which allows the student to complete the school schedule with areas of interest. In the approved version, Sociology appears alongside History, Geography and Philosophy as mandatory subjects in the curriculum, grouped in the area of "applied human and social sciences". The text now goes to discussion and final approval in the Brazilian Senate.

Thus, despite what happened in some of the historical periods that we have seen earlier in this text, the debate on the Teaching of Sociology and its role in the school and in the curriculum has not cooled down and no longer constitutes a hidden scientific object in the discussion forums about discipline and education. This is being carried forward by intellectuals, educators and school communities committed to a

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<sup>41</sup> "Quilombola" refers to the descendants of enslaved Africans who formed communities called quilombos, where they resisted oppression and preserved their cultures and traditions. These communities, present in various regions of Brazil, are recognized for their historical and cultural contributions, and have specific rights guaranteed by Brazilian legislation.

<sup>42</sup> Victory for Brazilian Education: withdrawal of PL 5230/2023 from the agenda of the Chamber of Deputies represents the strength of the educational community and the retreat of sectors averse to the right to education. (2023, December 20). National Campaign for the Right to Education. Recovered from <https://campanha.org.br/noticias/2023/12/20/vitoria-da-educacao-brasileira-retirada-do-pl-52302023-da-pauta-da-camara-dos-deputados-representa-a-forca-da-comunidade-educacional-e-recuo-de-setores-avessos-ao-direito-a-educacao/>

public, free, quality and socially referenced education. In other words, there are paths and hope for the struggle for permanence and a dignified place for discipline in high school based on the political-educational debate, the construction of alternatives and the resolution of the problems verified. One of the symptoms of this construction was the approval at the National Conference on Education (Conae),<sup>43</sup> 2024 edition – based on pressure from Abecs and the National Campaign for the Right to Education – in the Base Document of Axis III of CONAE 2024 the mandatory teaching of Sociology in all years of High School and the implementation in the 8th and 9th years of Elementary School, that now depends on the deputies and senators to, in fact, have their approval and implementation of this indication of the document.

We believe that in the coming years the story of Teaching of Sociology will continue in the Brazilian conjuncture, with new challenges: the effective conclusion of the debate on High School and the debate on the new National Education Plan (Pne) 2024-2034<sup>44</sup>, which may impact the Teaching of Sociology within a context of fierce disputes – in the political field – between the progressive camp and the far right<sup>45</sup>. This debate is on the agenda in the national and international contexts<sup>46</sup> and the level of organization and action of the actors of the opposing political fields will be fundamental for the maintenance of discipline in the school benches.

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<sup>43</sup> The National Conference on Education (Conae) is an important event that aims to promote the debate and development of educational public policies in Brazil. Its central attribution is to provide a democratic space for dialogue between different actors in the educational community, including government, civil society, education professionals and students, to discuss relevant issues and propose guidelines for the improvement of the country's education system. Conae has significant weight in the formulation of educational policies, as its deliberations directly influence the decisions made by public managers and can guide future actions in the field of education.

<sup>44</sup> The National Education Plan (PNE) is a fundamental instrument to guide educational policies in Brazil. It establishes goals and strategies for the development of education in various areas, such as the universalization of access to basic and higher education, the improvement of the quality of teaching, the appreciation of education professionals, and the promotion of inclusion and diversity. The PNE is prepared based on extensive consultation with civil society and has a ten-year time horizon and is periodically reviewed to monitor and adapt to the country's educational demands and challenges. As a guiding document, the PNE has great relevance in the definition of policies and actions implemented by federal, state and municipal governments in the field of education.

<sup>45</sup> A more conservative Congress. (2022, November 25). Perseu Abramo Foundation. Retrieved from <https://fpabramo.org.br/focusbrasil/2022/11/25/um-congresso-mais-conservador/>

<sup>46</sup> Florida to Abolish Sociology Teaching at State Colleges: 'Hijacked by the Left' (2024, January 28). MediaTalks. Retrieved from <https://mediatalks.uol.com.br/2024/01/28/florida-remove-ensino-de-sociologia-das-faculdades-estaduais>

From a curricular point of view, we believe that today the discipline also has challenges, especially if we consider its presence in school benches, since it faces significant obstacles when it comes to effectively incorporating the theme of diversity. The perspective of the Teaching of Sociology, still connected to the capacity to provoke the "denaturalization" and the "estrangement" of social phenomena, finds itself in a new moment, in which a perspective flourishes – based on the debates on the formation for citizenship – in which Brazil is interpreted (and is on the stage of) one of the greatest socioeconomic disparities in the world.

While some enjoy privileges and access to opportunities, a significant portion of the population faces precarious living conditions. From this perspective, the Teaching of Sociology in high school should address these disparities, providing conceptual tools for students to understand the origins and consequences of social inequality, as well as to explore possible ways to reduce it.

Thus, in the face of a Brazil marked by inequality, racism and violence, the Teaching of Sociology in high school should, in theory, provide conceptual tools and space for open discussions, capable of facing the challenges of a complex society and, more importantly, committed to the construction of a more just and egalitarian country. The discipline is therefore being confronted with the need to consider critical approaches that act to dismantle the colonial structures that persist in the Brazilian culture.

One of the challenges for advancing over this obstacle is the persistence of epistemic monoculture, in which certain perspectives dominate academic discourse through the need to decentralize knowledge and recognize the various forms of knowledge production, incorporating historically marginalized voices. This indicates that the Teaching of Sociology has often reproduced eurocentric tendencies, neglecting local experiences and knowledge, and today it is urged to deconstruct these hegemonic narratives, promoting the valorization of plural and contextualized epistemologies.

Institutional structures also pose important challenges for the inclusion of diversity in sociological teaching. The lack of representation in teaching bodies – although this perspective may be questioned in public schools – and curricular rigidity can limit the effectiveness of inclusive initiatives. Teacher training, therefore, is also a key component in overcoming these challenges. Empowering educators to

incorporate cultural diversity into their pedagogical practices is essential to transform sociology teaching into an inclusive and diverse space.

In addition, we believe that promoting intercultural and interclass dialogue is crucial to creating spaces for negotiation between different cultures and epistemologies, recognizing the richness that diversity brings to sociological understanding. Finally, the inclusion of the theme of diversity in the Teaching of Sociology in Brazil requires a critical approach that is still in the process of construction and debate.

Overcoming the challenges involves not only the revision of curricula – although the broadest possible discussion about their assumptions is essential – but also a profound change in the way knowledge is produced, disseminated and valued in the Brazilian academic and school environment. Where these debates go, however, only time will tell<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> To deepen this debate, we recommend three works: a. the "Dictionary of Sociology Teaching" (Brunetta, Bodart, Cigales 2020) which contains entries that deepen in detail all the meanings assumed by the discipline reported in the excerpts that we detail here; b. for the recovery of the developmentalist debate of the 1960s and 1970s in Brazil and what meanings were gestated for the discipline in this period, we believe that the analysis of the works of Alexandre Fraga (Fraga, 2020) and Marco Antonio Perruso (Perruso, 2009) is of great value; c. we also indicate, and finally, the article by Cristiano Bodart (Bodart, 2021) that expands in the second decade of the twenty-first century the conception of the Teaching of Sociology beyond the meaning for the discipline gestated between the 1980s and the 2000s.

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