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PRIVATE BILINGUAL SCHOOLS AND TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

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Abstract

Amid the tendencies of the Brazilian private education system to meet the elites' demand for the so-called international capital, the article discusses the growing offer of bilingualism in early childhood education. The goal is to analyze the qualifications required from teachers in light of recent discussions on the horizontal stratification of the Brazilian higher education system and their adverse effects on education programs. Interviews were conducted with representatives of five schools located in elite neighborhoods in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Academic titles, certificates of proficiency, native fluency, and practical skills make up the requirements for teachers to work with children aged 0-5 years. The trend toward bilingualism in private schools is a process that exacerbates inequalities in opportunities among Brazilian teachers.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION • PRIVATE SCHOOL • TEACHING WORK

AS ESCOLAS PRIVADAS BILÍNGUES E A QUALIFICAÇÃO DOCENTE

Resumo

Em meio às tendências da rede privada de ensino no Brasil de atender à demanda das elites, o artigo discute a oferta de bilinguismo na educação infantil, analisando a qualificação exigida dos professores à luz das discussões sobre a estratificação horizontal do sistema de ensino superior brasileiro e seus efeitos para os cursos de Pedagogia. Foram realizadas entrevistas com representantes de cinco estabelecimentos em bairros nobres da cidade do Rio de Janeiro. Titulações, comprovação de proficiência, fluência “nativa” e habilidades práticas são requisitos básicos da qualificação docente para atuar com crianças de 0 a 5 anos. Evidencia-se que a tendência ao bilinguismo nas escolas privadas agrava as desigualdades de oportunidades entre os docentes.

EDUCAÇÃO BILÍNGUE • EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL • ESCOLA PRIVADA • TRABALHO DOCENTE

LAS ESCUELAS PRIVADAS BILINGÜES Y LA CALIFICACIÓN DOCENTE

Resumen

En lo que atañe a las tendencias de la red privada de enseñanza en Brasil de atender a la demanda de las élites, el artículo discute la oferta de bilingüismo en la educación infantil, analizando la calificación que se exige a los profesores a la luz de las discusiones sobre la estratificación horizontal del sistema de educación superior brasileño y sus efectos para los cursos de Pedagogía. Se realizaron entrevistas con representantes de cinco establecimientos ubicados en barrios nobles de la ciudad de Rio de Janeiro. Titulaciones, comprobación de proficiencia, fluencia “nativa” y habilidades prácticas son requisitos básicos de la calificación docente para actuar con niños de 0 a 5 años. Se pone de manifiesto que la tendencia al bilingüismo en las escuelas privadas agrava las desigualdades de oportunidades entre los docentes.

ENSEÑANZA BILINGÜE • EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL • ESCUELA PRIVADA • TRABAJO DOCENTE

LES ÉCOLES PRIVÉES BILINGUES ET LA QUALIFICATION DES ENSEIGNANTS

Résumé

Dans le contexte où le réseau privé d'enseignement au Brésil répond re à une demande des élites, cet article discute l'offre du bilinguisme dans l'éducation de la petite enfance, en analysant la qualification exigée des enseignants à la lumière des discussions sur la stratification horizontale du système d'enseignement supérieur brésilien et ses effets dans les cours de Pédagogie. Des interviews ont été réalisées avec des représentantes de cinq établissements dans des quartiers nobles de la ville de Rio de Janeiro. Des titres (ou diplômes), certificats de compétence en langues, maîtrise comme un « natif » et habiletés pratiques sont des exigences minimales de la qualification des enseignants pour travailler avec des enfants de 0 à 5 ans. Cela met en évidence que la tendance au bilinguisme dans les écoles privées aggrave les inégalités d'opportunités entre les enseignants.

ENSEIGNEMENT BILINGUE • ÉDUCATION DE LA PETITE ENFANCE • ÉCOLE PRIVÉE
• TRAVAIL D'ENSEIGNEMENT

STUDIES ON ELITE EDUCATION INDICATE THAT FAMILIES INVEST IN THE INTERNATIONALIZATION

of studies to acquire international capital (Van Zanten et al., 2015; Aguiar & Nogueira, 2012). Between 2014 and 2019, the bilingual school market grew between 6% and 10% in Brazil and generated BRL 250 million (USD 50 million) (“Tendência que veio para ficar: escolas que têm um programa bilíngue conquistam mais alunos e pais pelo Brasil: escolas regulares têm apostado em programas bilíngues para oferecer ensino de inglês qualificado dentro da própria instituição”, 2019; Vieira, 2019). Bilingual educational services had the second-highest growth in revenues in the second quarter of 2019, according to the Brazilian Franchising Association (ABF, n.d.). The middle and upper classes are investing more in schools in the education sector, in response to the demands for education that will equip people with language skills to work in several countries, according to the National Federation of Private Schools (Fenep, n.d.).

One thing that stands out in this phenomenon is the introduction of bilingualism at an increasingly early age (0-5 years) in private educational settings. It is important to point out that contact with a second language is not required by the Ministry of Education for students at this learning stage. For early childhood education, schools must provide an environment that promotes opportunities for “interaction and play that allows children to live, play participate, explore, express themselves, and get to know each other” (Ministério da Educação – MEC, n.d.). However, there is a growing offer of bilingual preschool programs and bilingual daycare centers in the private education system. Although the subject raises many interesting questions, the object of this study is to reflect on the new qualifications required of teachers by the schools that offer bilingual education.

This article aims to reflect on the requirements demanded by this emerging educational market in light of recent discussions on the main determining factor for the expansion of Brazilian higher education: teacher training. The research looks for reasons for the growing trend of bilingual education within the sociological literature on elite schooling. The study shows the views, practices, and challenges of private schools concerning the qualification, training, and admission of teachers to work in the area of bilingual early childhood education. The unique characteristics of the legislation concerning the offer of bilingualism in the state of Rio de Janeiro are also considered. Qualitative data was collected with representatives of five private schools located in elite neighborhoods in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Educational strategies of social closure

The literature on elites’ schooling has indicated a contemporary trend towards the internationalization of education as a strategy of social closure (Van Zanten et al., 2015). For middle and upper classes, international schooling represents a necessary capital to obtain social, economic, and symbolic advantages for their children (Almeida & Nogueira, 2002). It is a strategy intended to equip their offspring with the necessary skills that will allow them to comfortably move about the international community through the mastery of a foreign language and the knowledge of different countries and cultures (Aguiar, 2009).

In Brazil, studies show that the middle and upper classes are investing more in education, especially in schools that feature policies for internationalization (Nogueira et al., 2008; Almeida, 2015). Private schools have been modifying their educational policies in response to these demands. Some of the ways of meeting these demands are the early introduction of foreign language learning, the promotion of a bilingual curriculum, and international travel to produce international identities (Aguiar & Nogueira, 2012).

At the same time, the elites' schooling in private compulsory education settings in Brazil seems to be reacting to the democratization policies designed to facilitate the access of underprivileged populations to higher education, especially as of 2002 (Almeida, 2015). Affirmative actions have made for a greater level of social inclusion within the university environment and greater access of black people and students coming from public schools (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE, 2019). Almeida (2015) believes that the elites have resignified Brazilian universities after this massification of higher education. For the elites, the degrees offered in these institutions no longer represent exclusivity and distinction, which has led elites to seek new forms of distinctiveness and strategies to maintain positions of power.

Thus, new demands arise for the attributes and qualifications provided by universities and professional training, and internationalization starts to be perceived as a key element for university training and the construction of careers (Cattani & Kieling, 2007). Thus, these aspirations must be understood as part of a set of new strategies for the social closure of the elites in Brazil (Almeida, 2015; Van Zanten et al., 2015), and its impact on all levels of schooling (Vieira, 2007; Aguiar, 2009).

The increased offer of bilingualism in Brazilian private schools must be seen from the view that the elite wants to obtain cultural and social capital for their children at increasingly higher levels. Middle and upper classes are looking for more selective forms of schooling at increasingly precocious levels. This is the case of learning a foreign language, markedly English, in early childhood education, from 0 to 5.

Bilingualism regulations in schools

One effect of the growing demand from elite families for training to perform in globalized markets can be seen in the transformation of the teaching practices of private schools. Studies focus on the curriculum changes experienced in schools engaged in internationalization projects, especially with the adoption of the International Baccalaureate Program (Doherty, 2009; Tarc, 2009; Ziegler, 2014). However, these studies are aimed at the higher levels of compulsory education since the purpose of the program was validating the entry of students into prestigious and internationally recognized universities (Ziegler, 2014).

The regulation of the bilingual curriculum deserves to be debated from the view of early childhood education. The Ministry of Education recognizes few specific schools as officially bilingual, the schools for the deaf, those located at the country borders, and those for the indigenous tribes. There is no national legislation to regulate the prominent bilingual schools in Brazil. It is worth mentioning that there is also no regulation on foreign language teaching in early childhood education or elementary school. The Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) [Common Base National Curriculum] refers to foreign language teaching from grade 6 onwards.

In many states, self-claimed bilingual schools are not subject to regulatory legislation or the inspection of educational bodies concerning the implementation, evaluation, and development of bilingual educational programs (Storto, 2015). This lack of regulation and alignment of understanding causes confusion among parents, students, and the school community, making the field of bilingual education controversial and misunderstood (Megale, 2014).

Mello (2011) points out that the term bilingual education is widely used to define diverse models and forms of teaching where instruction or part of it is carried out in a language other than that used at home. Freeman (1998) states that the meaning of bilingual education – and its effectiveness –, is a source of confusion and conflict at the political level, in educational practice, and in the press.

In this uncertain scenario, many institutions call themselves bilingual or international due to the lack of proper information or because they seek to use it as a marketing tool to attract parents interested in the internationalization of education (Aguiar, 2009).

Although there is still no national legislation on the subject, the states of Rio de Janeiro and Santa Catarina came up with official legislation in 2013 and 2016, respectively. They established parameters and requirements for bilingual education and students' qualification. The deliberation of the Conselho Estadual de Educação (CEE) do Rio de Janeiro [State Council of Education of Rio de Janeiro] (Deliberação n. 341, 2013) stated the rules to provide bilingual and international education in compulsory education. The council is responsible for issuing an authorization for schools to operate since they comply with the CEE's deliberation.

CEE requires a school providing bilingual education to offer subjects and activities in the adopted foreign language. This position is in line with the perspective of bilingual education presented by Hamers and Blanc (2000), in which teaching instruction must be carried out in two languages. The resolution reiterates, however, that teaching in a second language must be allocated in a complementary period, in addition to the 800 class hours required for compulsory Brazilian education:

Art. 7. The institution of compulsory education that intends to offer teaching with the characteristics of a bilingual or international school, in line with its Political Pedagogical Project – PPP, must: I- present a curriculum with a workload of at least 800 (eight hundred) class hours which are to be used for the teaching of the mandatory subjects defined by the Brazilian national curriculum and complementary curriculum taught in Portuguese and complemented by an additional workload that contemplates the need for teaching the adopted foreign language. (Deliberação n. 341, 2013, own translation).

Bilingual schooling specialist, Megale (2018), recognizes that these first attempts to define parameters represent an advance in the educational scenario, especially given the growth of this type of school in Brazil and the absence of legal parameters at the national level. Not with standing, the author points out criticisms based on the analysis of official documents, revealing incongruities and contradictions in the conceptualization of bilingualism from the perspective of culture, interculturality, linguistic repertoire, and bilingual subjects, with a view predominantly centered on language teaching.

Since the legislation of the state of Rio de Janeiro determines the need for authorization by the CEE, it is assumed that bilingual education became a more regulated market. In turn, the offer of this educational service has become standardized, protecting consumers from schools that claim to be bilingual just to gain business. On the other hand, no studies have been found that analyze the impact of state legislation on how private schools offer bilingual education in the states of Rio de Janeiro and Santa Catarina.

Bilingual school teachers and the national context of teacher training

The growing offer of bilingual schools brings attention to the changes in the teachers' profile. The teacher is the main human resource of schools since they are responsible for students' education, now expanded by the perspective of bilingualism. The need for a professional with new knowledge and new skills to work in this emerging scenario brings questions on their training, their family background, and their preparation to meet what Cunha (2011) would call the new market interferences in school curricula.

The requirement for higher education training for early childhood education teachers is recent in Brazil. It was made official by the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (LDB) [Law of National Compulsory Education Guidelines], in 1996. Previously, early childhood education teacher training would take place at the secondary level, at the named Normal modality. Despite determining the requirement for training at a higher level for one to teach in the early years, article n. 62 of the LDB (Lei n. 9.394, 1996) leaves room for professionals already trained at the high school level to continue working as teachers:

Teacher training for compulsory education will take place at a higher level, in a full degree course at universities and higher education institutions. For the teaching of early childhood education and in the first 5 (five) years of elementary school, the minimum training required will be that offered at secondary school level at Normal modality. (Lei n. 9.394, 1996, own translation).

Since the changes in 1996, several legal documents point to the universalization of higher education training for all compulsory education teachers. Examples of this are presented by the Conselho Nacional de Educação (CNE) [National Council of Education] published in the official technical reports CNE/CEB n. 1 (Resolução CNE/CEB n. 1, 1999) and the technical report CNE/CEB n. 1 (Parecer CNE/CEB n. 1, 2003). According to these documents, despite permitting teachers with Normal modality secondary level to teach early years and first grades of elementary school, it is desirable for all teachers to have higher education to guarantee the quality of education in the initial years.

Holders of a secondary level school qualification, as well as those who came to obtain it under the terms of Law n. 9.394/96, have a guaranteed right (until the end of their lives) to be professional teachers in early childhood education settings or in the initial grades of elementary school, according to their qualification. Teacher training for compulsory education at a higher level is desirable, although the training at secondary level is permitted for early childhood education and initial grades of elementary education. (Parecer CNE/CEB n. 1, 2003, own translation).

The current national education plan (known as PNE), approved in 2014, predicts undergraduate degree of all teachers of compulsory education, including early childhood education and the early years of elementary school, as a goal to be accomplished by 2024. PNE goal 15:

To guarantee, in a collaborative regime among the Union, the states, the Federal District, and the municipalities, within 1 (one) year of the validity of this PNE, a national policy for the training of education professionals referred to in items I, II, and III of the caput of art. 61 of Law n. 9.394, of December 20, 1996, ensured that all compulsory education teachers have specific higher education, obtained in a university course in the area of knowledge in which they work. (Lei n. 13.005, 2014, own translation).

The requirement of a undergraduate degree to teach early childhood education and the first years of elementary school changed higher education in Brazil, which adapted to meet the new demand. According to Pinto (2002), despite the possibility of teachers trained at the high school level to continue teaching early childhood education and the first years of elementary education, teacher training programs at the high school level were extinguished in most states, and there was growth in higher education programs of Pedagogy.

As a result of these changes, university degrees in education underwent a long process of curriculum review and restructuring (Gripp & Rodrigues, 2017, 2019). After many debates, the National Curriculum Guidelines for Pedagogy programs were approved in 2006. Their main feature concerned teacher training for the early school years, but they also included management training, which led the Pedagogy program to include a wide spectrum of subjects that barely fit in the duration of the program and its workload (Honorato et al., 2018; Gripp & Rodrigues, 2017, 2019). Gatti reinforce the authors' view:

Putting all of these guidelines into a curricular matrix, especially for the evening classes where most of the students in these programs can be found is no easy task. What can be seen is that teacher training for compulsory education is carried out in all types of programs, in a fragmented way between the subjects and levels of education. Brazil does not have, in the institutions of higher education, its own college or institute to train these professionals based on a common

standard, as observed in other countries, where there are teacher training centers covering all specialties, with studies, researches, and extension programs related to the didactic activity and the reflections and theories associated with it. (Gatti, 2010, p. 1.358, own translation).

Gripp and Rodrigues (2019) analyzed the Pedagogy program's curriculum used in public and private higher education institutions. The results showed that the same content was used over the years. Content that prioritizes theory over technique and teaching practice was also observed. The research shows the programs, the excess of introductory programs, and few class hours devoted to the core subjects, such as preparing students to teach literacy.

When comparing the research by Gripp and Rodrigues (2019), carried out in 2017, and the research by Gatti (2009) and Libâneo (2010), carried out in 2008 and 2009 respectively, it is possible to identify similarity in the number of theory-based programs in different areas of knowledge and those linked to the professionalization of the teacher, which corroborates the lack of focus of the undergraduate programs in Pedagogy on teaching and teaching practices, and the lack of update of the curriculum at least for the last ten years.

The study by Honorato et al. (2018) shows a trend of offering undergraduate programs in Pedagogy at night school in the last two decades. The offer of night classes is connected to the possibility of democratizing access to higher education for students who need to combine work and study, indicating the large presence of working students attending these programs. The history of night programs in higher education has already been characterized by more precarious teaching and learning conditions compared to daytime hours (Oliveira et al., 2010).

Regarding the expansion of distance learning programs, it should be noted that since its conception, a number of criticisms have been made regarding its curricular organization and the quality of the programs offered (Honorato et al., 2018). The results of the National Student Performance Exam (Enade) indicate a worse outcome when compared to face-to-face programs (Enade, 2019). In teacher training programs, distance learning becomes more worrying since this program should require an emphasis on pedagogical practice.

As stated by Honorato et al. (2018), the change in the characteristics of the Brazilian higher education with the democratization of access, especially in the field of education, has played an important role in the institutional configuration of higher education in the country. Despite that, the authors point out the absence of studies that assess the increase in the number of alumni from undergraduate degrees and how having a degree affects their career opportunities.

Dubet (2015) states that inequalities are reproduced in the higher education system according to students' cultural capital, economic status, area of residence, and other social markers. Honorato et al. (2018, p. 33, own translation) affirm that the social profile of students in undergraduate programs, including Pedagogy, is mainly made up of "women, students of evening programs, of disadvantaged family origin, and an increasing number of them coming from distance learning programs run by private institutions". More in-depth analyzes of teacher training must consider the horizontal stratification of higher education (Lucas, 2001; Charles & Bradley, 2002; Gerber & Cheung, 2008) since Pedagogy programs in Brazil reveal structural social aspects (Grill & Honorato, 2019). The great majority of Pedagogy students in Brazil come from families with low levels of education and low income who study at night because they must work during the day (Gripp & Rodrigues, 2019).

When shifting the national challenges of teacher training for early childhood education to job opportunities in bilingual schools, the issue becomes even more complex. In addition to training in Pedagogy, other requirements are needed for a professional to teach in a school with a bilingual curriculum. According to determination n. 341/2013 of CEE/RJ, the institution of bilingual education must: "V – have a Brazilian teaching staff with the necessary qualifications for the subjects they teach and teachers with qualifications or accredited proficiency certification in the adopted foreign language" (Deliberação n. 341, 2013).

In addition to higher education training in Pedagogy or high school professional training in education, the teacher must be qualified to teach in the foreign language adopted by the bilingual education institution. This qualification must be attested through proper certification. The same requirement for teacher training for bilingual education is reinforced at the municipal level in Rio de Janeiro by deliberation n. 22/2012, which deals specifically with early childhood education (Deliberação n. 22, 2012, art. 20).

Megale and Liberali (2016) verified a lack of undergraduate programs with a curriculum adapted for training professionals for bilingual education. This finding raises a paradoxical phenomenon: if, on the one hand, there was an increase in the number of Pedagogy professionals due to the expansion of access to higher education, on the other hand, there is a detachment between academic training and the demands increasingly required by the job market in the private school system. According to the authors,

In Brazil, in opposition to the growth of EBE [Portuguese-English bilingual schools], there is practically an absence of teacher training programs focused on the theoretical and practical aspects of bilingualism and bilingual education. . . . The number of extension and graduate programs in Brazil intended to train professionals for EBE has been gradually increased since undergraduate programs seem to ignore the growing demand for trained teachers to work in these schools. (Megale & Liberali, 2016, p. 14, own translation).

Gardner (2012) highlights the difficulty in finding, in different educational contexts, qualified teachers with experience in both early childhood education and bilingual education who are simultaneously proficient in the English language.

Given the growth of bilingualism in the private system of compulsory education and the challenges of teacher training in Brazil, it is reasonable to conclude that, although the Brazilian higher education system has been qualifying an ever increasing number of teachers, it will not be easy for this type of labor to meet the requirements of private school employers for early childhood education. This process only aggravates the panorama of unequal opportunities among teachers in the Brazilian marketplace.

Methodology

The participants selected for this research work in the compulsory education segment in the private schools of the city of Rio de Janeiro that claim to be bilingual. It is important to point out that, despite having been recommended by individuals connected to these schools, some were reluctant to accept the invitation to participate in the research saying they were unavailable. Of the twelve schools contacted, only five agreed to contribute and be interviewed.

The difficulties faced by researchers to get access to elite educational institutions are the subject of discussion in Jay (2002), Almeida et al. (2012), and Fávoro (2009). Fávoro (2009) reports that, of the 39 schools contacted during her research, only five agreed to be interviewed, and only two agreed to face-to-face interviews, even when the interviews took place outside the researched school.

In-depth interviews were conducted with representatives from five private schools who worked either as managers, pedagogical coordinators, or coordinators of the bilingual programs. An interview was also conducted with one of the owners of a consulting company working to implement bilingual curricula in compulsory education institutions all over Brazil. The interviews took place between June and July 2019. They were conducted within the facilities of each school, lasting approximately one hour.

All interviews were recorded with the authorization of the schools and later transcribed. Respondents requested confidentiality regarding their identity and the school's name. In this study, they will be referred to in the male gender. Among the topics discussed during the interviews, we will focus here on those relating to the teaching profession in the bilingual education

system, the teacher's career and qualifications, and the number of professionals who meet those requirements available in the job market.

Charts 1 and 2 below respectively present a summary of information from the schools and those who provided this information.

CHART 1
PROFILE OF THE SCHOOLS RESEARCHED

Identification	Type of partnership for the implementation of bilingual education	Monthly fee (2019)
School A	Bilingual education company	R\$ 2,900.00
School B	Language school	R\$ 2,795.00
School C	Bilingual education franchise	R\$ 3,100.00
School D	Bilingual education company	R\$ 2,925.00
School E	Language school	R\$ 2,900.00

Source: Authors' elaboration with research data.

CHART 2
RESPONDENTS PROFILE

Identification	Position held by the interviewee	Academic background	Time of employment at the school
School A	Coordinator of the bilingual program and owner of a company specialized in implementing bilingual education in schools	Master's in Linguistics, PhD student in Linguistics, focusing on second language acquisition	4 years
School B	Manager Coordinator of the bilingual program	Degree in Pedagogy Degree in Pedagogy, specialization in Psychopedagogy, School Management and Pedagogical Coordination, Cambridge certificate – English proficiency (CPE) and English teaching qualification (TKT)	20 years 18 years
School C	Pedagogical coordinator	Degree in Psychology, teacher training at the high school level	7 years
School D	Pedagogical coordinator	Degree in Pedagogy, specialization in People management and Leadership	3 years
School E	Pedagogical coordinator	Degree in Pedagogy, specialization in Inclusive Special Education	1 year

Source: Authors' elaboration with research data.

Schools researched

School A operates in early childhood education, working with children from 3 months to 5 years of age. The school is located in the elite South Zone of Rio de Janeiro. It was created as a regular school. In 2013, due to the perceived need to adapt to the new market of early childhood schools and the growth of bilingual education in this segment, it started its transition process to become a bilingual school. The first transition attempt occurred with the hiring of a company specialized in large-sized bilingual education, but the partnership was not successful. Subsequently, in 2015, a new small, specialized company was hired to implement bilingualism in the school. The partnership with this company extends to this day.

School B is active in all segments of compulsory education – early childhood education, elementary education, and high school. It has several units in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro. The implementation of bilingualism started in 1996 through a partnership with a language institute, which continues today. The language institute is responsible for both the bilingual program's coordination and the English classes offered in the regular units. The bilingual program's coordination by the language institute consists of two coordinators, responsible for the school's bilingual program, one in charge of early childhood education and elementary school I, the other in charge of elementary school II and high school.

The transition to becoming bilingual was the schools' initiative to meet parents' demand, who sought quality English teaching for their children and considered that the workload of language programs was not enough to guarantee the desired fluency for their children.

School C is part of an international franchise system of bilingual schools. The franchise chain operates in different countries and in all regions of Brazil, in early childhood education, elementary and high school. In the city of Rio de Janeiro, the school works with students that range from early childhood education to the seventh year of elementary school II.

School D became a bilingual school through a partnership with a language institute, which was responsible for the school's English curriculum. However, the partnership ended two years later due to the methodological incompatibility between the school and the contractor. Currently, the bilingual program is conducted through a partnership with a company that is specialized in bilingual education.

The motivation for opening the bilingual school came from the owner, who had worked for 40 years in a regular school kindergarten and realized the opportunity for the growth of bilingualism in this segment.

School E is a Catholic school in Rio de Janeiro, which works in early childhood education and elementary school I. It has a partnership with a language institute for the coordination and execution of the bilingual education program. The implementation of bilingualism at the school occurred in response to competition from other schools already offering bilingual programs or extended hours of English.

Note that the average monthly fee for the five schools studied (BRL 2,924.00) is higher than the average for private schools in the city of Rio de Janeiro and corresponds to approximately 76% of the average salary of formal workers in the city of Rio de Janeiro. It is equivalent to 4.1 minimum wages.¹ In addition, all schools are located in middle and upper middle class neighborhoods.

Results

The interviews showed that education professionals recognize that parents of children enrolled in the schools' early childhood education programs primarily seek a school environment that values quality child care and a pedagogical project that values free play, aspects endorsed by professionals as being relevant:

1 Minimum wage in 2017: BRL 937.00.

We realize that their demands [parent's and guardians'] for early childhood education are still very much focused on care. Very. The main questions are "Did they eat? Did they sleep? Where they okay? Was he okay? Did he like it? Did he have a good day?" . . . We are very concerned with the pedagogical part; we work so much on it . . . On playing, on free play. (School D).

In child education we are definitely concerned with care, right? With hygiene, with affection. All of this is supposed to happen in early childhood education and in school in general. But in addition to all of this, [School B] has a distinctive pedagogical project, wich focuses on the interaction among children, . . . and play. (School B).

. . . the view (School A) has of children was what delighted me the most. This perspective of respecting the child's time. Care, where caring actually mixes with educating. This approach brings what is typical of the child's age to this school environment, without missing the main focus on the school's mission of educating children. Because it is a school, right? So we need to have this. (School A).

School A also classified parents' demands in two different age ranges for children from 0 to 2 years old, the needs are focused on providing them with a feeling of acceptance and belonging. These needs are closely related to the woman's (mother) return to the job market and the end of maternity leave. The second age range is children from 3 onwards. Parents' concerns begin with literacy and the child's preparation for starting elementary school.

Here, I see a need in this age group, in this very first age from 0 to 2, a need that derives from the market and that will touch a lot of issues concerning our position as women in the marketplace. I feel the mothers suffering, this separation is difficult. . . . So, I think that, in this first moment, they often look for an extension of the home, this homely environment. I have many parents who are much less concerned with the pedagogical part at the beginning (0 to 2 years) than with this lonely environment that will make the school an extension of the home. . . . When they arrive at 3, between 3 to 5 years of age. Then, I think this focus changes a little. Of course, the need to see that their children experience a feeling of acceptance and belonging continues, mothers always seek these elements, but at this point, they become concerned with the child's future. Many times, they are worried about preparing their child for elementary school. (School A).

Concerning the requirements for teachers in these institutions, it has been previously mentioned that they must undergo the necessary training to teach in early childhood education, either holding a degree in education or having undergone professional teacher training at the high school level. In terms of academic background, the respondents' answers are in line with the requirements defined by Brazilian legislation. It is also clear that there is a preference for professionals with university education. Fluency in English was mentioned as a requirement for hiring professionals to work in bilingual education. Fluent English and Native English fluency were recurrent expressions during the interviews.

All the schools have the interview process for teaching positions consists of formal requirements to be fulfilled by professionals, which are materialized in certificates and degrees to comply with the legislation, such as Pedagogy or professional teacher training at the high school level as well as proficiency certificates that will evidence teacher's mastery of the foreign language. However, such requirements are still not sufficient and it is necessary to evidence these skills in practice. The teachers go through a test in the classroom in day-to-day classroom situations.

The respondents make a distinction between the level of fluency in English required for teaching *English as a foreign language* – such as required by language programs with a workload of around 50 minutes – to teaching *in English*, namely, developing specific contents in English with a higher number of hours as well as in situations that require quick thinking and a wide range of vocabulary.

I am not talking about an English class where I am going to teach for 50 minutes. I am talking about 10 hours a week of English with children in the classroom, gathered in a circle, asking permission to go to the bathroom, a whole spectrum of classroom vocabulary. . . it is another sort of vocabulary, it is another intention. Everything must have a pedagogical intention behind it. (School A).

I do not know if they are used to other schools or other environments, and they say “I know how to teach an English class,” but they do not have native English fluency, you know? The person comes to us believing that he or she is fluent in English, but it is not true. So, this is one of the things that takes a lot of time. (School B).

I interview people who have good mastery of English, but when I put them into situations like this, they mess up, then I know it will not work. Because you must talk to the students. The student is crying because so-and-so hit him/her, it has nothing to do with school, you must know how to resolve these problems. (School C).

Another point noticed in the interviews is the hiring of professionals with a degree in Languages (Portuguese-English) for the purpose of teaching early childhood education. It is worth mentioning, in this context, the comments of schools D and E:

He [the expected teacher] must have at least the Cambridge advanced level of fluency. Or a TOEFL. We prefer the Cambridge certificate because it is a lifetime certificate and the TOEFL is only valid for two years. I prefer teachers who have a degree in Pedagogy or who have undergone professional teacher training at the high school level because I think it makes all the difference. The prerequisite is a degree in either Pedagogy or Languages. I give preference to those who have a degree in Pedagogy because I think they have another insight, especially as far as early childhood education is concerned. (School D).

So, schools employ Language teachers and instruct these teachers to take a complementary degree in education or to study Pedagogy. Because four years of an undergraduate program in Pedagogy gives you an accredited educator. But in four years I am unable to train a person with the necessary English fluency. (Escola E).

Despite considering the undergraduate degree in pedagogy, or professional teacher training at high school level as a prerequisite for hiring, schools reported that they employ professionals with language degrees who are fluent in English to make up their teaching staff. Due to the scarcity of professionals with the necessary proficiency in English, it is better for them to hire those with language degrees who can later take a complementary degree in the area of education, than teachers who have a degree in education whose English is below the desired level.

It should be noted that hiring teachers with a Language degree to teach early childhood education is in accordance with the Brazilian legislation. While the Pedagogy degree is focused on education, with a deeper understanding of theories and models of knowledge transmission and application in the classroom, Language degrees (Portuguese-English) equips the specialist teacher to teach in elementary school II and high school.

This shift in the hiring profile may be associated with the intervention of companies specialized in recruiting and selecting teachers, whose priority is finding professionals with proficiency in English. This process must be understood in the context of market interferences in school curricula (Cunha, 2011). Currently, it is up to the specialized companies to check whether the candidates are adequate to fill the position of bilingual teacher according to the parameters established by the school:

The [specialized company] selects these teachers. For example, here at [School A]. When we started, I figured out how many teachers I would need, we advertised the positions, and I did the entire process of interviewing and selecting the candidates. I discuss the teacher’s salary with the school beforehand. We help the school determine the teacher’s salary according to the region. We carry

out research when arriving in the region to find out the average amount that should be offered. We instruct the school on the acceptable minimum salary. We tell the school, "I think you should offer something around this amount". So, we do this type of consulting work for the school. We define the salary, then we announce the position, we do the entire selection and interview process... And the last step is a conversation with the management. For example, we get the group of candidates that have passed the selection process – three, four, five, it depends on the size of the group – and we tell the school: "all of them are on the same level, they are qualified, I would hire any of these." From then on, it is up to the school to decide what to do. (School A Consultant).

The [specialized company] also requires qualified applicants, and it is this same company that attests that they are ready and able to teach. It always comes from [a specialized company], then [School B] hires the teacher, but always under their supervision. . . . Then, there is an interview for us to meet the professionals and send them to the personnel department. . . . They screen them and then send them back to us so that we can check whether they are suitable to work with early childhood education. (School B).

The teachers must have a degree either in Pedagogy or in English so that they will be eligible to work with education in English. The partner assists in the hiring process, screening the qualified professionals. (School E).

The interviews reveal the process of the specialized companies ascendancy over the schools. This occurs mainly because, in addition to carrying out the selection and recruitment of the teachers, these companies also recommend professionals who are considered qualified to teach. A deeper examination of the possible conflicts between the pedagogical proposals of the schools and the consulting companies at the time of this selection process would be worthwhile, because these consulting companies are primarily interested in the teacher's proficiency in the foreign language aimed at the proper application of their own bilingual program.

Among the interviewees, it was perceived that the Pedagogy programs do not adequately address the theoretical aspects related to bilingualism and bilingual education required to work in this segment, as corroborated by the interviewee from School A:

. . . the training of this teacher is still flawed. We still have very few educational institutions that qualify. . . . I think we are still far away from the universities. . . . This topic is not mentioned. This is my point of view today; I came from UERJ [Rio de Janeiro State University]... I see that this market is still barely discussed at the undergraduate level. We study subjects that address bilingualism in the master's program, in the doctorate program, but you see that the teacher training... In the Pedagogy program we do not even talk about bilingualism in most universities. In the Language program, too little is said. It is as if you were training that professional for an English program. (School A)

The need for specific subjects on bilingual education can also be seen in the degrees in Foreign Languages – at the public and private higher education institutions where the teaching is supposedly more focused on training foreign language teachers, the teaching of foreign languages in public schools, and structural aspects of languages (Salgado et al., 2009).

It should be noted that, in order to fill these gaps in teacher training, extension and graduate programs are slowly emerging with the purpose of equipping and qualifying this growing demand for teachers, which has not been properly met by the undergraduate programs. Colleges and universities have also been offering distance learning extension programs that discuss aspects of bilingual education with the purpose of qualifying professionals to work in bilingual schools.

Hiring qualified Language teachers, as an alternative to fill the shortage of professionals in bilingual schools, seems to be reconfiguring not only the career of compulsory education teachers, but also the dynamics of the relationships between them, with specialist teachers earning better salaries,

with more prestige and competitiveness, taking over positions that traditionally belonged to teachers professionally qualified at high school level and teachers with a degree in Pedagogy:

I think it is an excellent opportunity, an excellent market for teachers [bilingual schools]. In terms of the market, because we are talking about a salary that is 40% to 50% higher than the average salaries, which are markedly low, and labor is scarce. I guess I look at it not only as a future for English language teachers, but also to those who are qualified in Portuguese. Today we already feel that the Portuguese teacher also needs to have a knowledge of bilingualism. Because this child goes from one curriculum to another. (School A).

We realize an increasing need for Portuguese language teachers to be ready [in terms of professional training]. And then be ready to [work at] a Brazilian bilingual school. . . . Every school must feature the teaching of Portuguese in Brazil, even international schools. (School D).

It appears that the change in the teaching profile also affects teachers who teach the Portuguese language. Schools seem to be realizing the need for the adaptation of this professional to a new student profile, one who learns through two different languages and ends up not dissociating them during classes, regardless of the language used by the teacher.

Another point that deserves to be highlighted in this context of changes is how bilingual schools have transformed the relationship between teachers within the school, generating an asymmetry between teachers who teach in Portuguese and teachers who teach in English:

We came across another challenge faced by the Brazilian education system. The socioeconomic and cultural level of the teachers who teach Portuguese are outstandingly different from that of those who teach English. This is still a very striking difference. So, you need a whole new training process. You cannot simply start a training process based on the level of English teachers [disregarding the differences between them and the Portuguese teachers]. If I [or actors interested in the field of education] intend to integrate, I have to open it [training process] to everyone, right? (School A).

This difference is reinforced by the increase in the level of professional training requirements of bilingual teachers to work in schools:

. . . these professionals [bilingual teachers] must be very prepared and we keep on demanding more and more of them, right? In the past, you were a high school trained teacher and could be a teacher forever. Today you cannot teach having only the high school professional training anymore, “don’t you have a Pedagogy degree?”. It became a requirement. In the past, having a graduate degree would make one stand out in the market, an advantage of around 500%. Today, [the professional] finishes college, and immediately starts graduate studies. So, a 25 to 26-year-old teacher who has a degree, has a market. The requirements today are very different. . . . All [bilingual teachers] have a degree. I think that today, most have graduate degrees. Many in Psychopedagogy or Linguistics. The graduates of Languages take their master’s degree. Those who have a Pedagogy degree usually prefer to take graduate programs. (School B).

The statements illustrate the growing demand from schools for increasingly specialized bilingual teachers. This demand increases the inequality between a teacher who was a student-worker in the high school professional training (or who studied Pedagogy either at night or through distance learning) and a teacher from a more privileged condition, with greater cultural capital, international experience, access to language programs, graduate programs, and who studied Pedagogy in person and during the day.

Ziegler (2014) addresses a similar theme when she reflects on the ambivalent position of private school teachers in Buenos Aires, which adopt the International Baccalaureate Program. If on the one hand, these teachers are kept in a subordinate social position in comparison to groups of students they are formally educating, on the other hand, the symbolic function of preparing the members of the elite and promoting their social selection should also confer a prestigious position to this group.

The interviewees showed that the human resources practices and policies, such as standard salaries, continuous training and education, pedagogical projects, processes of supervision of teaching activity, and evaluation and control processes, are different for teachers who teach in a foreign language to those who teach in Portuguese. Megale criticizes the fact that teachers who teach in Portuguese tend to be removed from the theoretical and methodological discussions that permeate bilingual teaching. She also highlights the importance of “placing the teacher at the center of this discussion, along with teachers who teach in the additional language” (2018, p. 221). It is possible to assume that these differences could fragment teaching within the same institution of education, which should work hand in hand in accordance with the principles of bilingual education.

In short, the new dynamics generate a series of transformations that are subject to greater reflection, such as the emergence of a new professional teacher profile; the inadequacy of the Pedagogy program curriculum given the new demand for professionals to work in bilingual education; the conflict of interests between different actors to guarantee the protection of some professions (Cunha, 2011); the violation of Brazilian law by bilingual schools; and the reconfiguration of relationships within the school environment.

Final considerations

This work aimed to reflect on the new requirements for teacher training to work in bilingual schools in the segment of early childhood education, which should be understood in the context of trends in the private education system to meet the demands of the elite for the acquisition of international capital for their children at increasingly younger ages.

To work with children from 0 to 5 years of age, teachers are required to have higher education and graduate degrees, proficiency in a foreign language certified by international exams, native fluency in a foreign language and practical skills. The more demanding requirements for the selection and recruitment of teachers to work in bilingual schools has been a challenge for the schools themselves, given the scarcity of professionals who fit this expected profile in the job market. Considering the belief expressed by one interviewee “four years of an undergraduate program in Pedagogy gives you an accredited educator. But in four years I am unable to train a person with the necessary English fluency”, professionals who hold a Language degree have been sought by some schools, which will instruct and encourage them to take complementary studies in Pedagogy.

The implementation of bilingualism seems to cause asymmetries among teachers within the school space. The differences in educational, social, and economic profiles among teachers, coupled with the use of different practices and policies by those in charge of human resources at these schools, will position teachers who teach in a foreign language in better conditions of salary, prestige, and competitiveness. Another aspect that affects the qualification of teachers who teach in Portuguese is the greater need to adapt to meet a new student profile, a student who learns through two different languages.

Given the growth of the bilingual school market and the problems in teacher training in Brazil, it is understood that, although the Brazilian higher education system is qualifying an increasing number of educators, it will not be easy for this workforce to meet the requirements of employers in the private sector of early childhood education. The tendency to offer bilingualism is, therefore, a process that is likely to aggravate inequalities in opportunities among teachers in Brazil.

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Data availability statement

The data of this research will be available on demand to the authors.

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