

# Towards technocracy? Current education policy in Brazil

## Rumo à tecnocracia? Política educacional no Brasil atual

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### **Resumo:**

O Brasil está caminhando para uma forma mais tecnocrática de administração pública? Este artigo considera a questão, primeiro, examinando as principais características e o curso da política educacional durante o primeiro ano de governo de Dilma Rousseff e, segundo, por estudar as principais características de tecnocracia. O texto considera que a questão da educação pelo governo é focado principalmente em questões de quantidade (ou seja, através do estabelecimento de um novo plano nacional de educação que enfatiza o aumento do acesso à educação formal, mais recursos públicos e uso de recursos direcionados). Em termos de tecnocracia, o artigo observa uma despolitização em curso no setor da educação desde 1995, diminuindo a sua capacidade como veículo de transformação social e econômica radical. O artigo conclui que, apesar disso, o processo continua incompleto e que ainda há margem para um maior envolvimento político, especialmente fora do governo.

*Palavras-chave: Políticas educacionais; Tecnocracia; Educação brasileira.*

### **Abstract:**

Is Brazil moving towards a more technocratic form of public administration? This article considers the question, first by examining the main features and course of education policy during the first year of Dilma Rousseff's government and second, by studying the main features of technocracy. It finds that the issue of education by both government and stakeholders is primarily focused on issues of quantity over quality (i.e. through the establishment of a new national education plan which emphasises increased access to formal schooling, more public resources and use of targeted funds). In terms of technocracy ('rule by experts'), the article notes an ongoing depoliticisation in the education sector since 1995, diminishing its capacity as a vehicle for radical social and economic transformation. The article concludes that despite this, the process remains incomplete and that there is still scope for greater political engagement, especially from outside government.

*Keywords: Education Policies; Technocracy; Brazilian Education.*

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Education policy in Brazil has undergone a substantial change over the past 20 years. In 1995 the new administration under Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) declared education one of its key priorities. The effect was immediate with a number of key changes being initiated and implemented during FHC's first term (1995-99) including the drafting of national education guidelines, a constitutional amendment that guaranteed financial resources for primary education (and within it teachers' salaries), a rationalisation of responsibilities within the federal system (i.e. municipalities and primary education, states and secondary education, the federal government and higher education) and the introduction and improvement of several form of evaluation and assessment.

In 2002 the Partido dos Trabalhadores' (PT) Luis Inacio 'Lula' da Silva won the presidency at the fourth attempt. But instead of a fundamental transformation of political, economic and social life the new government opted to maintain much of what it inherited. In the case of education this involved both a continuation and extension of the policies set out under FHC. At the beginning of his second term in January 2007 (which expired at the end of 2010), President Luiz Inacio 'Lula' da Silva announced that education would be a priority area, along with income distribution. Lula saw education as an important means to reduce inequality, democratise access to knowledge and power and to make Brazil a 'knowledge society' that was globally competitive (Folha de São Paulo 2007). By the end of Lula's presidency there had been a number of changes, including to the constitutional amendment to now guarantee funds for both primary and secondary (i.e. basic) education, the introduction of a national teacher's salary and a student grant for poorer students to attend (mainly private) universities and a programme of university construction and expansion.

These changes all pointed to advances in Brazilian education over the past two decades. Certainly there are now more children and young people attending school and receiving education than ever before. At the same time, the quality of that education remains poor. In addition to this, the educational sphere presents insights into the state of policymaking and the future of democracy in Brazil more generally. In particular the experience of education under the PT in recent years suggests that Brazil may be undergoing a shift, from democratic or political control of education policy towards a more technocratic approach. More specifically this transition has meant a change from policymaking away from the political sphere (i.e. contestation between political parties and political and civil societies based on ideological differences) and towards policymaking by technical specialists (i.e. within elite group of individuals, mainly in government and largely separated from wider political and ideological influences).

To account for this assumption, the article is structured in several parts. The first highlights the continuity in Brazilian education policy as shown by the statements made by Brazil's president since January 2011, Dilma Rousseff. The second outlines the features of the main aspect of current education policy during Rousseff's first year as president. In particular, this is based on the Plano Nacional de Educação (PNE), which is set to run for the period 2011-2020. The third part looks at an important part of social policy under Lula, the bolsa familia (family grant), and its educational component, the bolsa escola (school grant). The fourth considers the contrasting issues of quantity and quality in education by highlighting how past changes of increased educational access have not led to any significant change in performance.

The final two parts of the article place developments in the education sector in the wider context of policymaking more generally. The fifth section examines the features associated with the concept of 'technocracy' and technocratic management, drawing on scholarly literature in general and in relation to Latin America, with specific reference to the case of Chile – one of the more notable examples of technocratic policymaking in the region. The final section then considers the extent to which Brazil's education sector is experiencing a similar process of technocratic management. Specifically it asks whether the PT and its supporters in social movements have reduced the role of ideology in favour of a more technocratic approach

to policymaking. At the same time, this course – especially the their understanding of education and its link to economic development – appears to be determining the type of educational opportunities offered, thereby potentially ‘locking’ Brazil into the global economy at the low end of the value-added chain. The essay concludes by noting that although there does appear to be a tendency towards greater technocracy in Brazil’s educational policymaking, this cannot be extrapolated to other areas of public policy. In addition, it notes that technocracy and democracy can coexist, but for this to happen will require efforts from both political and civil society.

### **President Rousseff and the ‘knowledge society’**

In January 2011 power was transferred from President Lula to President Dilma Rousseff. The switch was largely cosmetic though; as Lula’s handpicked successor, Rousseff presents Brazil with the prospect of policy continuity. In the field of education this was demonstrated by the shared commitment by Rousseff and the PT to a model of education that would contribute to making Brazil’ a globally competitive economy.

Central to this aim would be what Lula called at the outset of his second term of office and the PT stated in its guidelines for a future government, the ‘knowledge society’ (Folha de São Paulo 2007; PT 2010). To achieve this would require the elimination of illiteracy, increased broadband access, a higher education, science and technology budget, increased levels of vocational training and university provision and a more integrated education system (PT 2010).

During her election campaign, presidential candidate Rousseff adopted the policies associated with the ‘knowledge society’. In addition to declaring her support for a number of previously started programmes to increase university education, student grants (ProUni) and end illiteracy, she proposed new measures. These included a proposed construction of 6000 nurseries, new technical schools in cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants, deliver an integrated education system from pre-school to post-graduate level and ensure it was of a sufficiently high quality – mainly through higher levels of teacher training and pay (Universia 2010).

As president Rousseff has continued in the same vein. Her approach to education in particular and social policy more generally maintains a process that began in the 1990s with efforts to achieve universalism and better quality public services. Following her inauguration, Rousseff said that she would improve the quality of primary education and work with municipalities to increase the availability of pre-school opportunities. In addition she said that she would also look to expand access at the secondary level (especially in vocational training) and support teachers with ongoing training and reasonable pay (Folha de São Paulo 2011a).

To lead these commitments in the educational sphere, Rousseff has chosen to retain the same team at the Ministério da Educação (MEC) as that put in place by Lula midway during his first term. At the time, the appointment of Fernando Haddad in mid-2005 was an unanticipated consequence of the mensalão scandal which removed several of Lula’s closest political associates in government and obliging him to promote the previously untried Haddad. Although Haddad lacked both ministerial experience and an individual electoral base (in contrast to his two predecessors, Tarso Genro and Cristovam Buarque, who had both previously been governors), his stewardship brought stability and consensus to the education portfolio. This was felt soon after the beginning of Lula’s second term, when Haddad and his team presented the Plano de Desenvolvimento da Educação (PDE) in April 2007. This document provided the Lula’s government’s broadest and most comprehensive statement regarding its vision for education at the time. In particular it presented a connection between educational advances and economic development and the measures to be used to achieve this, including more teacher training and pay, the use of evaluation and assessment mechanisms (and their refinements) and greater integration of the education system as a whole (MEC 2007).

## The PNE: setting the course of education for the next decade

Both the presence of Haddad and his team on the one hand and the objectives laid out in the PDE on the other have contributed to a new Plano Nacional da Educação (PNE), which was presented for the first time in December 2010. The new PNE will provide the foundations for education policy and actions for the period 2011-2020 (PNE 2), thereby replacing the previous 2001-10 version (PNE 1) which was introduced by the FHC government in 2000. It is expected that the bulk of political activity in the education sector during 2011 will be taken up with PNE 2's passage through Congress. However, in order to understand the features of the PNE 2, it is necessary to appreciate the main features of PNE 1 and the PDE.

The PNE 1 set out a number of objectives and priority areas for the previous decade. The main objectives were to increase the total level of schooling in the population, improve the quality of that education, reduce social and regional inequalities in public education and promote greater democracy in school management. However, because financial resources were limited, the plan set out a number of priority areas. These included: guaranteeing primary education for all 7 to 14 year olds; guaranteeing primary education to all those who previously did not have access to it or failed to complete it; increased availability of other forms of education (i.e. pre-school, secondary and higher education); greater appreciation of teachers' positions (through better work conditions, pay and career structure); and the development of evaluation and assessment systems at all levels (Congresso Nacional 2000).

The introduction of the PDE in April 2007 was the result of a process of internal analysis and drafting at the MEC during the mid-2000s. As such it was significant for two reasons. First, it provided an assessment of the direction of education policy midway through the PNE 1 decade. Second, it set out Lula and the PT's first comprehensive view of education from the perspective of government. It considered PNE 1 as having presented 'a fair diagnosis of the educational problems, but [left] open the issue of actions to be taken to improve the quality of education.' (MEC 2007, 7) In particular it noted the fragmentation and 'false opposition's inherent in the vision and organisation of education in Brazil: between basic and higher education, within basic education, secondary and vocational education, literacy programmes and youth and adult education, and between regular and special education. The PDE proposed their integration through several key action areas. These would include: more teaching training and a national teacher's salary, an extension of constitutionally guaranteed funding to all of basic education, enhancements to evaluation and assessment systems (including their use as a means of regulation in higher education), planning and management programmes, a restructuring and expansion programme for public universities, grants to enable greater access to university by the poor, expansion of vocational training opportunities and continued literacy programmes (MEC 2007).

Towards the end of Lula's second term action began on PNE 2. The qualified support for PNE 1 was reflected by the fact that Haddad's team at the MEC identified a number of limitations with it that they hoped to overcome in the current plan. First, they noted that although there was a federal division of responsibility for education (where states and municipalities assumed the bulk of responsibility for basic education), most states and municipalities failed to pass legislation that guaranteed resources for education and set out penalties for failing to do so. Second, the federal government did not introduce legal provisions to ensure a set amount for educational investment. A number of social movements wanted this to be secured at 7 percent of GDP; this was subsequently vetoed by FHC. Third, most of the objectives in the first PNE were either partially met or failed to be met, largely because most objectives were not quantified and therefore difficult to scrutinise. The exceptions to this were the expansion of primary education to nine years and improvements in evaluation mechanisms (Moço 2010).

In response to the criticisms associated with the previous plan, Haddad's team proposed that PNE 2 have fewer – but more concrete and realisable – objectives (Moço 2010). The resulting measures constituted both a continuation and expansion of those set out in both PNE 1 and the PDE by extending the

government's priority areas beyond primary education (the focus in PNE 1) to include the wider concern with basic education and other educational forms (PDE). In particular, 20 objectives were put forward, the most important of which are as follows:

- Universalise pre-school education for 4-5 year olds by 2016 and provide pre-school access to half of children aged up to 3 years old by 2020
- Universalise nine years of primary education to all children aged between 6 and 14 years old
- Universalise availability to 15-17 year olds by 2016 and achieve an 85 percent matriculation rate by 2020
- Achieve child literacy by the age of 8
- Offer fulltime education in 50 percent of public schools
- Meet set national targets in primary and secondary education in IDEB...
- Ensure 12 years of schooling for people aged 18-24 years among the least advantaged
- Eliminate absolute illiteracy and reduce functional literacy by half by 2020
- Double the number matriculated in vocational training
- Double the number matriculated in higher education
- Ensure all primary and secondary school teachers have university training
- Ensure 50 percent of primary and secondary school teachers have post-graduate training
- Ensure teachers' salaries are around the same level as those with similar levels of schooling
- Ensure career paths for all teachers within two years
- Increase public investment to a minimum of 7 percent of GDP (Globo 2010b)

To date the content of the PNE 2 has not resulted in any significant political or social opposition. Rather there is general support for its objectives, especially apparent among education stakeholders most closely associated with the PT, including, the national school teachers union (CNTE), the federal university presidents' association (Andifes) and the national university students union (UNE). That they have done so overlooks PNE 2's genesis, being largely formulated within the MEC and without much external consultation.

Instead, the main concern for stakeholders has been less about the formation of education policy than its content – and more specifically, the key issue appears to be material resources. Both teachers and students have been concerned at increasing the share of resources for basic education. The CNTE is concerned at the level of public investment in education and although they were encouraged by the proposed increase from the present 5 percent to 7 percent by 2020, they are lobbying for it to be raised to 10 percent (as they did in 2000) in the final document (CUT São Paulo 2011). Similarly, the UNE has lobbied an increase in the share of resources for education. In particular it has proposed that half of the social fund to be established from Brazil's windfall in the form of recently discovered pre-salt oil reserves be allocated to education (Aquino and Peduzzi 2011). At the end of August 2011 demonstrations were organised and held by university students and professors in Brasília and São Paulo to press the government to commit itself to education resources equivalent to 10 percent of GDP (Desidério 2011).

The prospect of the government raising the amount dedicated to education may be unlikely to happen: although the measure was approved by Congress, Lula vetoed it before leaving office (Folha de São Paulo 2011b). In October 2011 the education minister, Fernando Haddad, appeared to offer a concession, by saying that the total amount for 2012 might be above 7 percent, but would not exceed 10 percent (Bianchi 2011). Meanwhile in higher education, Andifes is lobbying for sufficient financial resources by adjusting the government's REUNI university expansion programme to take into account existing universities and courses (Andifes 2011). At the same it is pressing the government to ensure greater autonomy for universities, especially in relation to their ability to set their own budgets (Brasil 2011).

## **The *Bolsa Familia* and its role in education**

Alongside the general support for the Rousseff government's education policy and objectives in PNE 2, so does there also appear to be broad support for the continuation of another aspect of Lula's social policy: the bolsa familia (family grant). Set up in 2003, it brought together four different cash-conditional transfer (CCT) programmes, some of which originated at the local level and including an education component through the bolsa escola (school grant). Briefly, the bolsa escola consists of a payment made to the head of a categorised poor household to ensure that its children of primary age go to school. As part of the larger bolsa familia, its introduction has been significant for several reasons, including the political consensus that has been generated around it, its combination of universal and targeted social protection and its results.

The bolsa familia and bolsa escola look set to continue as a central plank in the Rousseff presidency. This is explicable on several counts. First, in political terms, the bolsa familia has gained such popularity since its introduction that it is now an established and unchallenged part of Brazil's social policy. Lula's re-election in 2006 has been attributed to the creation of a new constituency of bolsa familia recipients who voted for him (Hunter and Power 2007; Zucco 2008) although more recent scholarship has suggested that it did not play as large a role as previously assumed since the poor already voted for Lula (Bohn 2011). Notwithstanding this, politicians are aware of the bolsa familia's value and so it has become an aspect of social policy supported by all sides of the political divide as shown by the opposition's support for the policy in the 2006 and 2010 elections.

Second, the appeal of the bolsa familia lies with its ability to mean different things to different people, owing to the contrary purposes to which it can be put. Bastagli (2009) has noted that the objective of CCTs in Latin America varies, from more limited versions that see them as a means of concentrating assistance on the very poorest (e.g. Chile), as a form of compensation (e.g. Honduras) or in a more extensive fashion, including as a means of human capital accumulation (e.g. Mexico). The case of the bolsa familia combines both this focused and expansive approach, on the one hand being a targeted policy tool to help the poor and on the other being a means to achieving universal social protection by covering the total poor population. In other words, the bolsa familia maintains the principle of universalism in social protection, while delivering a more focused approach (Costa 2009).

Third, a part of the bolsa familia's appeal to different groups may be due to its cost. Although it is one of the more expensive CCTs in Latin America, at around 0.4 percent of GDP in 2007 (Bastagli 2009), this must be put into perspective. Social assistance programmes tend to take up around 1-2 percent of GDP in comparison, while CCTs cost around 5 percent of what governments spend on education in total and 15 percent of what government spend on primary education (Barrientos and Hulme 2008; Lomeli 2008). This may account in part for support from international organisations like the World Bank, who have previously advocated tighter government expenditure.

Fourth, much of the bolsa familia's appeal may be attributed to its results. Certainly, its payments have contributed to greater income distribution among beneficiaries. Meanwhile in the educational sphere it has led to an increase in school enrolments and attendance by poorer children. That achievement has been used to justify the claim that through marks it out from other forms of social spending, which have not achieved similarly broad social results (Haddad 2008; Costa 2009; Soares et al 2010).

## **Quantity over quality**

The debate over PNE 2 and the support for the bolsa familia highlight a key aspect of Brazilian education policy: namely, a focus on expanding educational access and opportunities. This is evident in the considerable attention that has been given to increasing enrolments and school attendance at the primary level since the 1990s and more recently through more pre-school and post-primary opportunities, including vocational training, university provision and expanding the coverage of the bolsa familia.

These measures point to an emphasis on 'quantity'. What they do not do though, is address issues of 'quality' within the system and the extent to which the educational opportunities being created have led to improved educational outcomes. The distinction between these two concepts is not a new one. Indeed, policymakers have been aware of the difference since the 1990s when Brazil was one of the first Latin American countries to introduce a programme of evaluation and assessment, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Schwartzman 2004). However, recognition of the importance of quality has not had led to any significant improvements in terms of the education provided to Brazil's children and young people.

In higher education, both the FHC and Lula governments deemed evaluation as necessary to address the largely unregulated and un-scrutinised growth of universities – especially in the private sector – over the past half century (Schwartzman 2004; Brunner 2009). This process of largely private expansion, increasingly tied to human capital development theory on the one hand (i.e. the use of education to prepare individuals for economic activity and employment) and linked to a few financially and globally connected individuals and groups on the other hand, have largely undermined the previous Latin American 'Córdoba model' of the public university: i.e. autonomy from government control, democratic governance by faculty, students and administrative staff, full state funding and nominal tuition fees and the university's political role in transforming society (Bernasconi 2008; Portlea de Oliveira 2009).

Despite the introduction of evaluation systems by both the FHC and Lula governments, Schwartzman (2004) noted that there were few direct results, since almost no institution lost its accreditation. However, in its place evaluation has had an indirect impact by encouraging students to monitor the quality of particular courses. At the same time the effects of greater information are constrained by a number of features associated with today's Latin American (and Brazilian) universities. Although research-oriented activities have become increasingly valued (Bernasconi 2008), academic life for students remains much as it has previously been, based mainly on rigid teaching structures directed towards the attainment of professional diplomas rather than general education. One of the consequences of this is the low status and market value of a bachelor degree on its own and a teaching approach that emphasises content and the subordinate role of students through the prioritisation of lectures over skills, research and problem solving (Brunner 2009).

In primary and secondary education the establishment of standards and assessment systems have not been employed to maximum effect. This is largely due to various legal issues, resistance and a failure by schools and educators to make use of them to improve teaching and learning processes (PREAL 2009). The failure to use these evaluation mechanisms is especially problematic given the findings that are emerging about the state of learning among Brazilian children and young people. First, despite the increase in enrolments and attendance over the past two decades, the completion of secondary school has proved to be a challenge; grade repetition is common, contributing to students dropping out. Second, there continues to be considerable inequalities in educational opportunities, which is reflected both in a student's family background – the poor, black and female being less likely to complete school – and the different levels of school funding and provision across the country (PREAL 2009).

Third, the performance of Brazil's education system when compared internationally is similarly poor. Since 2000 Brazil has participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). These exams assess the performance of students aged 15 years old across the OECD and several other countries on reading, maths and science. In the 2006 science exam, over half of Brazilian scored at or below the lowest level. Brazil's performance is broadly in line with the other Latin American countries that have participated in PISA, with the richest 20 percent of Latin American students (with the exception of Chile) failing to outscore the poorest 20 percent of European students in reading, maths and science. Within the country, children from the poorest backgrounds in Brazil perform well below their richer counterparts (as is also the case in Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay). Moreover, of growing concern is the fact that the gap does not appear to be shrinking

(Puryear and Ortega Godspeed 2011). Indeed, evidence associated with the bolsa escolar is broadly in line with overall educational trends: although it has contributed to increased enrolments and school attendance, it has had no discernable impact on learning. That this has occurred may arguably be attributed to its design, since performance outcomes were not set as an objective by policymakers (Lomelí 2008).

The failures of Brazil's education system to at least three main challenges for Brazil's policymakers: (1) a lack of basic competence in reading and understanding texts; (2) an absence of mathematical logic and understanding; and (3) an inability to make analogies and make sense of the physical world (Costin 2010). To address this, policymakers will have to introduce objectives within policy tools that promote and incentivise improvements in teaching and learning outcomes. Increasingly, policymakers appear to recognise the importance of such 'quality' issues (as demonstrated by the use of the term by Rousseff and others). However, their proposed solutions appear mainly quantity-based. In the Brazilian context this has included increasing the length of the school year and the number of days students are to spend in school (Gumiarães 2011). In addition, it has included an emphasis on teacher-oriented activities, including more training opportunities and higher pay (the latter to improve teachers' standing in society). This may be due in part to the role of teachers' organisations, not only as an interest group with a stake in maintaining the present forms of social protection and welfare (see Hunter and Sugiyama 2009), but also as an important base of support for the PT.

### **The rise of technocracy?**

The previous sections have pointed to general trends in Brazil's education policy, through an emphasis on increasing access and resources to formal schooling, the latter to be achieved through a greater share of public spending on the one hand and through targeted programmes like the bolsa escola on the other.

The focus on these themes points towards a more general aspect of policymaking in the education sector: namely, an emphasis on technical issues over political ones. In this sense, Rousseff's rhetoric on education since becoming president has been especially revealing, since it suggests where Brazilian policymaking may be heading, from democracy to technocracy. Specifically, this assumes a form of administration known as technocracy, which is generally perceived to be 'rule by experts.' (Centeno and Silva 1998) The basis of technocrats' role in decision-making is based on their specialised knowledge and expertise (Fischer 1990). At the same time, technocracy gives rise to a tension which exists between democracy and technocracy; where the achievement of democracy (through free choice of various options) is constrained by the oligarchic (and therefore concentrated) nature of government (Meynaud 1968, 273). In effect, technocracy results in a more anti-democratic approach (Centeno 1998).

Technocracy's relationship to democracy presents one of the main features associated with the study of the phenomenon: namely, its normative dimension. On the one hand, technocracy has been portrayed in a positive light, as a means of achieving efficiency and the maximum results for the minimum effort (Meynaud 1968). On the other hand, it has been portrayed negatively. This criticism is drawn from several concerns: one, technocracy's focus on results means that it is increasingly divorced from humanity and sensitivity (Burris 1993; Silva 2008); two, it is anti-democratic, since technocrats tend to see politics as a problem rather than a solution, which they believe should be based on scientific reasoning towards problems (Fischer 1990); three, it is innately conservative, by emphasising economic growth over social concerns on the one hand and stressing political stability and order along with an unwillingness to challenge social hierarchy (Centeno and Silva 1998).

Alongside the technocracy's normative role are the various explanations and features associated with the phenomenon. The rise of technocracy has been identified with the process of industrialisation and the emergence of new technocratic social class, which may be based on their professionalism and expertise. Moreover, it appears to be the case that technocracy has emerged more in the welfare sector of the modern state as opposed to the



productive economic sector (Kellner and Berger 1992; Baud 1998). Within this arena scholars have noted the distinction which exists between different forms of control associated with certain groups, including bureaucratic, professional and technocratic control (Meynaud 1968; Burris 1993; Silva 2008). In particular Burris (1993) notes the rise of bureaucrats and professionals during the nineteenth century and their emphasis on specialised job tasks and formalised training on the one hand and technocrats' expertise as their basis of authority; Silva (2008) observes that while many technocrats work in bureaucracies, their scope for action is relatively greater and less constrained by top-down delegation.

The emergence of technocracy in Brazil appears to share some resemblances with other technocratic experiences. Within the region, the case of Chile has been especially noted in this regard (see below). In Latin America, during the 1990s scholars noted the emergence of 'technocratic democracies' in the region (Centeno and Silva 1998). This involves a continuing role for representative political institutions and politicians, who have nominal control over decision-making, but where technocrats frame the policy alternatives. For this arrangement to work though requires a consensus in both political and civil society regarding the main parameters on the role of the state and the preferred form of development. During the 1980s and 1990s this consensus was focused on the Washington Consensus, with free markets, private property and globalisation underpinning the consensus. In the 2000s this shifted, towards a more state-led form of economic and social development.

In Chile, the role of technocrats in policymaking has been seen as central since the return to democracy in 1990. This is in marked contrast to the conventional view of a more politician-centric approach and vibrant and dynamic democracy in the country, including in the education sector, prior to the military coup in 1973 (see Fischer 1979; Farrell 1986; Yocelvezky 1987; Corvalan 2003; Zemelman and Jara 2004). However, technocrats have long held influence in the Chilean state apparatus along alongside political parties in the design and implementation of different development projects since at least the 1920s (Ree 2007; Silva 2008). But whereas technocrats' standing was largely hidden for various reasons (including by themselves owing to negative public perception and the prominent role of intellectuals associated with particular ideologies and political parties) they became more prominent as an 'apolitical', most especially with the 'Chicago Boys' during the military regime between 1973 and 1990. While earlier technocrats had worked on the expansion of the public sector and the welfare system, the Chicago Boys concentrated on the imposition of austerity measures and a structural adjustment programme during the 1980s, which prompted opposition from the main centre and left-wing political parties and social movements (Silva 2008).

Following the transition to democracy in 1989 the centre-left Concertación coalition gained power. But instead of reversing the economic course that had precipitated the social protests in the first place, it persisted with them through a model of 'growth with equity'. Meanwhile the social movements that had supported the Concertación in opposition began to dissipate while successive governments resorted to increasingly technical responses to problems. In the education sector this led to policymakers maintaining the increasingly private actor-based structure of the outgoing military regime's model while trying to ameliorate the worst effects. The result of this process was that policymakers largely overlooked growing discontent with the system in civil society, thereby catching the incoming Michelle Bachelet government unawares when student protest and wider public opposition exploded on the streets in mid-2006 (Burton, forthcoming). Similar protests took place from May 2011 again, when students and teachers criticised the now rightwing government's commitment to the preceding education model.

Although technocracy is portrayed as apolitical – or rather anti-political (see Fischer 1990, 21-22), this need not be the case. As Meynaud (1968, 13-14) noted, technocracy need not mean the complete abandonment of politics from public administration; although technocrats may gain political influence within government, they can never enjoy absolute political power or autonomy on or over politicians. Indeed, the case of Chile appears to reflect this. On one side, the role of technocrats did provide stability as a moderating force in an increasingly

politically polarised environment after the 1920s. On the other side, the rise of technocracy has constrained the scope for wider political action in three ways: one, through the dominance and prominence of the middle class in the form of technocrats' backgrounds and measures carried out; two, through the tensions which exist between government and political parties where technocrats have acted as buffer between the two; and three, in technocrats' embedded autonomy vis-à-vis civil society (Silva 2008).

### **Education as a site for technocracy and its implications**

The role of technocrats in Latin America generally and in Chile in particular may provide some indication of where Brazil may be heading in terms of education policymaking under the PT governments of Lula and Rousseff. Within the state apparatus there appears to be a drive towards a less politicised and more expert-oriented form of administration. This is evident in two main key ways. First, there is the nature of the language used by the PT regarding the link between education and economic development is illustrative in this regard. Second, this reflects an internal change within the PT, which has seen its composition change since its foundation, away from the labouring working class and towards more middle class and white collar (especially in the public sector) individuals. At the same time, the leadership around Lula concentrated control of the party's policy direction, a process which was exacerbated by the PT's entry into government (thereby giving it greater access to resources over the wider party) and which was also largely supported by both the wider party and sympathetic social movements and organisations, whose memberships have tended to overlap (Samuels 2004; Burton 2011).

These internal and external changes in relation to the PT government during the 2000s meant that critical and vocal opposition has largely diminished. The effect of this has been to provide scope for both Rousseff and the PT to promote the notion of a depoliticised policy sphere (in education). She has repeatedly claimed the presence of a 'consensus': as an election candidate she argued there was little difference between the political parties regarding the need to invest in new public universities and teacher training; as president she has stressed the importance of government and society working together (Globo 2010a; Santos 2011; Marques 2011). Such language arguably contributes to greater legitimacy for her policies while delegitimizing those who oppose her. Such groups might include organisations more associated with dominant economic and private interests, with connections to the political opposition.

For Rousseff, depoliticisation is equated with more technocratic administration in the educational sphere. Policy is designed and implemented by an elite (in this case by technocrats within the MEC) and in which political and ideological issues are either consciously or unconsciously downplayed. In such circumstances, policymaking is 'technical' in that the objective is mainly to solve a problem in isolation rather than to identify a solution negotiated with relevant stakeholders. It is becoming increasingly apparent is the way that education policy is formulated by the PT government, including the PDE and PNE 2: more by the education minister and his team at MEC and less by education-related actors within and outside the party. Indeed, the absence of several of these stakeholders from the discussions around these documents is reflected both in their broad support for the assumptions and parameters set out in these plans on the one hand and arguably a decline in their role of providing scrutiny and oversight for civil society. This is most clearly expressed in the virtual absence of any public debate regarding issues of quality and especially ways to improve performance. The case of the school component of the bolsa familia is instructive in this regard, with government, political opposition and civil society in general agreement about its merit in terms of increased enrolment, attendance and household incomes and relatively little discussion concerning its learning outcomes.

Although the shared values between government and civil society (in the form of social movements like the teachers and students) has provided space for technocrats to stake a greater role in the education sector in Brazil, the rise of technocracy may also offer cause for concern. In particular, it may contribute to constraints both

in the political and economic sectors. Politically, the development of technocracy under the PT indicates that it is no longer an agent of radical political change. By broadly accepting the role of education as a means of building human capital development, the PT has come to acceptance the mainstream education debate. Moreover, this has meant Rousseff's and the PT's acceptance of a specific position for Brazil in the global economic hierarchy and the type of education to accommodate it. By accepting this position, the PT has largely abandoned its historic understanding of education. In particular, that view was close to that associated with Paulo Freire and his 'pedagogy of the oppressed': education was a force for liberation (Freire 1978, 1985). Moreover, that could be both individual and social: while Freire had concentrated on providing tools for the individual to realise his or her position in society, the PT in its early years extended this to the masses by viewing education as the means to achieve a more questioning and critical society – which would eventually challenge the status quo and build a socialist future (Gadotti and Pereira 1989).

Economically, both Rousseff and the PT have emphasised the importance of making Brazil more competitive in the global economy and the role that education can play. However, in Brazil's case (and Latin America more generally), the most competitive and dynamic sectors of the domestic economy have been in commodities and less value-added forms of manufacturing (Gereffi and Hempel 1996; IPPR 2011). Consequently, successive governments have promoted the acquisition of skills suitable for these sectors, through the promotion and expansion of vocational training. The effect of this may be to 'lock in' Brazil at the lower end of the global supply and value chain.

At the same time, it would be inaccurate to assume that the drive towards technocracy in Brazil's education sector is a recent phenomenon. Although education policy under both the Lula and Rousseff governments highlight the way in which the PT has become increasingly technocratic in its decision-making, the process did not begin in either 2003 or 2011. Instead, the role of technocrats in MEC began earlier. As with the Chilean example, it is possible to identify cases of technocratic decision-making within Brazilian education policy in earlier periods. Examples of this are numerous. They include the establishment of the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research (INEP), a research centre and think tank affiliated to MEC as well as decision-making undertaken by the military regime between 1964 and 1985, to match demand and supply through identifying economic and labour needs with the provision and availability of university degrees and courses.

However, more relevant in accounting for the present situation was in the period following the return to democracy in 1985 and especially during the Cardoso government between 1995 and 2002. Having prioritised education as a key policy area, Cardoso appointed a close lieutenant, Paulo Renato Souza, to be education minister. One of Souza's first tasks was to build a small and close team of advisors around him, who all had a high degree of autonomy in policymaking terms. With a clear agenda to improve the state of education, Souza and his team soon alighted on the need to change and implement new institutional arrangements, including in the form of national guidelines, constitutionally guaranteed resources for primary education and forms of assessment which they steered from above (Souza 2005; Cardoso 2006; Burton 2011).

For Souza and his team, the measures taken were done so for practical purposes rather than ideological. They did not perceive the changes that they were making as political ones which reflected a choice, but rather they were seen as apolitical and which they were obliged to take as a result of necessity. Indeed, the separation of education policy from politics was such that Souza (2005) entitled his memoir on his time and actions as education minister as 'The Management Revolution' (*A revolução gerenciada*). At the same time, the impact of these 'apolitical' and 'managerial' changes were deemed sufficiently deep that when Lula succeeded to the presidency in 2003, his own education team did not substantially change the structure they inherited. Moreover, it also arguably contributed to an awareness of the value of technocratic decision-making – at least in the education sector – which was taken up by subsequent PT governments under the Lula government, especially once stability was achieved when Haddad became education minister in 2005.

From this perspective, the prospects for Brazil's education sector in particular and democracy more generally looks especially bleak. But this need not be the case. First, although education policy in Brazil points to an increasingly technocratic approach, this does not mean that this is the case across all areas of public policy. This essay has focused on the case of education policy, where there appears to have been a clear trend towards greater use of technocratic decision-making under both PT governments since 2003. As a result, the study of education policy is but one study, which would need to be compared and contrasted with other public policy cases.

Second, although education policy under the PT governments has become increasingly technocratic, this process has not been complete; politics and democracy still remain present. This is evident in the role played by social movements like the teacher and student unions, which have continued to campaign for an increase in resources for education to 10 percent of GDP since the publication of PNE 2 and throughout 2011. In this respect, Brazil's education sector reflects that in Chile, where politics has continued to play an important role, most notably in the student protests in 2006 and 2011. Chile is especially relevant in this regard since it is arguably the one Latin American case where technocratic decision-making has been especially noted and visible in recent decades, especially during the right-wing military dictatorship and then under democracy during the rule of the centre-left Concertación governments.

Nevertheless, for technocracy and democracy to coexist there must be greater effort on the part of both the political and civil societies to achieve this end. For technocratic influence to be managed and checked, there is a need for greater scrutiny and oversight by politicians and social movements and organisations of decision-makers. While Parkin (1994) suggests that decision-makers would achieve more effective policies if they behaved in a less technocratic fashion and respond to community needs and demands, one cannot assume that they will behave in such a self-restraining manner. Therefore it is essential that external pressure is maintained. This will be achieved if both PT and non-PT politicians in the legislature constantly press for greater openness on the one hand while the teachers and student movements ensure sufficient distance from the government. In addition, this would be aided if contrary views relating to the role and purpose of education in Brazil by elements other than the government and the principle stakeholders were accorded greater media coverage. If this was achieved, then it may well be the case that the present consensus regarding education policy would be less apparent than is presently perceived. In so doing a more extensive debate about education might be possible, reducing the consensus in which technocracy operates and prompting a more political debate about the objectives of Brazil's education system.

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