'Disciplinarized knowledge': theoretical articulations in the field of the Curriculum

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Abstract
The text aims to examine more closely the theoretical articulations that we have produced regarding the notion of 'disciplinarized knowledge', resignifying two concepts ('school subject' and 'school knowledge'), which, in dialogue with Stuart Hall, we understand as being 'under erasure'. Perceiving the extent to which the struggles over these signifiers in the field of the Curriculum have been marked by a swinging movement crossed by the signification process of the term 'science', we seek to produce other hegemonies and antagonisms. This movement produces effects of power on the constitution of school culture. Among these effects, it interests us to highlight those that have the most direct effects on the understanding of the processes of producing, distributing and organizing what has been legitimized and validated as an object of teaching in Brazilian basic education. In dialogue with Michel Foucault and Ernest Laclau, driving us towards the notions of 'power' and 'politics', operating with the instability of every theoretical framework and its direct implication in the sedimentation and/or reactivation of meanings. In this perspective, we produced the notion of 'disciplinarized knowledge', understood here as resulting from an articulatory practice (Ernest Laclau & Chantal Mouffe) and, simultaneously an alchemical practice (Thomas Popkewitz).

Keywords: Curriculum; Disciplinarized knowledge; Discourse; Alchemical practice; Articulatory practice.

Introduction
This study aims to take a closer look at the theoretical articulation that we have produced regarding the notion of 'disciplinarized knowledge' (Gabriel & Ferreira, 2012). This will be done by assigning new meanings to two 'classic' concepts in the field of the Curriculum, i.e., 'school subject' and 'school knowledge', which we understand as being 'under erasure' (Hall, 1996) in our contemporary era. This understanding is supported by how Stuart Hall (1996) uses the expression 'under erasure' to reflect on how certain concepts are worn out when it comes to thinking of the demands of the present. However, to this author, these concepts could not be discarded, "since they have not been superseded dialectically, and there are no other entirely different concepts with which to replace them, there is nothing to do but to continue to think with them" (Hall, 1996, p. 1).

The understanding is also supported by the converging interests of two groups in the Nucleus of Curriculum Studies of the Faculty of Education at the
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Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (NEC/UFRJ): the Curriculum, Culture and History Teaching Study Group and the Curriculum History Study Group. In these groups, in productions on epistemology and the history of different types of academic and school knowledge and disciplines/subjects, we have explored the implications of the contributions of historians, political scientists and curricular experts from different theoretical backgrounds to think of the force of the ‘political’ in the structuring processes of the social school order.

In the work of Gabriel and Ferreira (2012), prompted by the challenge of Stuart Hall, we proposed to restore the terms ‘school subject’ and ‘school knowledge’, as we understood the discursive function of both in defining the boundaries between what is and what is not a democratic public school. This restoring has been done in our works by investing in other possible articulations between critical and post-critical theorizations of the Curriculum, particularly the post-structuralist aspects. In this endeavor, we have sought to look behind the crossed lines that mark certain ‘erasures’ (Hall, 1996), displacing previously fixed meanings to allow the emergence of new meanings. It is in this direction that we are betting on the heuristic potential of the term ‘disciplinarized knowledge’. This gamble does not mean a mere combination of existing terms. In dialogue with Michel Foucault and Ernest Laclau, we understand that the simple act of naming already means entering the political game, destabilizing frontiers amidst the processes of meaning. The expression ‘disciplinarized knowledge’ therefore offers us a rhetorical instrument for facing the current demands of difference, equality and quality as defined by and/or directed towards, the university and Brazilian public school.

In this text specifically, we continue exploring this heuristic potential of ‘disciplinarized knowledge’. We now do this by means of a shift towards notions of ‘power’ and ‘politics’, as well as the semantic field in which both are located. After all, since the early 1980s in Brazil, with the emergence and consolidation of critical curricular theories, the issue of power and its effects on the production of policies has guided debates and field research. In this text, we work with the understanding that this concern continues to be unavoidable in the constitution of a contemporary, democratic political agenda. Therefore, the conceptual shifts in the field of the Curriculum caused by the incorporation of post-critical perspectives do not mean the deletion and/or denial of issues of power and politics. It is an epistemic turn that allows us to see these same issues from another theoretical viewpoint. We argue that the use of the expression ‘disciplinarized knowledge’ is a way of operating this turn, ‘blurring’ the frontiers that tend to differentiate the critical and post-critical perspectives in the field.

To develop this argument, we have organized this text into two parts. In the first, we explain the dialogue with some currents of contemporary social theories that help us to rethink the notions of ‘power’ and ‘politics’, articulated to the notions of ‘discourse’ of Foucault (1970, 1972, 1981) and Laclau (1990, 1996, 2005). In the second, perceiving the expression ‘disciplinarized knowledge’ as an articulatory practice (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Laclau, 2005) and at the same time alchemical (Popkewitz, 1998), we rely on its explanatory strength to continue politicizing our reflections on school culture.
1. Power, policy and discourse: research notes

(...) there is no possible understanding of reality that does not constitutively require a passage through discourse, through meaning, through the inclusion of natural, human or physical facts, in systems of meaning that locate and place these facts in a hierarchy in the world. They are articulated or disputed with others in stabilizing the meanings of the objects that are described and located in the world (Burity, 2008, p. 41).

When we reflect on the contributions of the 'post' approaches to investigate the notion of 'disciplinarized knowledge', we share the perspective of Burity (2008), assuming that it is impossible to ignore discourse on political action and reflection. Nevertheless, this assumption, although it includes us in a large group of social science researchers that made a 'linguistic turn', does not discard a clearer stance amidst the heterogeneity of 'post' thinking.

First, an observation on the actual meaning of this prefix is necessary. Instead of naming an opposition, reaffirming a dichotomy or indicating a temporal location, the use of the prefix 'post' in the epistemic stance assumed here is a reference to the conceptual shifts regarding the same signifier. After all, the 'post' that precedes the term 'critical' does not mean 'anti' or 'posteriority'. We understand that the 'post-critical' perspective does not mean a denial of the 'critical' posture that, in the field of education, has operated with the recognition and problematization of the power relationships that cross it. On the contrary, it proposes to address, on other epistemic bases, the interface between power, politics and education. Second, far from involving an unambiguous movement, the expression 'post-critical' includes multiple perspectives ('post-modern', 'post-structural', 'post-foundational', 'post-Marxist' and post-colonial'). Although these are not synonymous, tend to be placed in a 'chain of equivalence', functioning as a 'constitutive exterior' (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001) in the process of defining the critical matrix.

In the limits of this text, it does not interest us to indulge in further debates on the various meanings that different terms assume when preceded by the prefix 'post'. On the contrary, we focus on how these signifiers are mobilized as instances in the 'chain of equivalence' that defines the prefix 'post'. The idea is to perceive them amidst a broader intellectual movement that, despite being heterogeneous, helps us to put to work, in the field of the Curriculum, certain aporias raised by the tensions between factors such as reality/discourse, science/culture, universal/particular, structural/agency and objective/subjective. We understand that facing these dilemmas is a way of participating in the political game amidst 'crises', such as those of representation, reason, truth, subject and school, which qualify the present time. In other words, we assume that the conceptual displacements made here, with a view to defining 'disciplinarized knowledge' are part of the political game. As mentioned, we do this by mobilizing other meanings of 'power' and 'politics', in a privileged dialogue with Foucault (1970, 1972, 1981) and Laclau (1990, 1996, 2005).

These two authors were not chosen at random. This choice is justified by recognizing the importance of both and their contributions to thinking of the social in political terms in our contemporary lives. They were involved in different intellectual movements, but it is important here to underline the aspects that draw them closer together, especially those that enabled "a renewal of policy, having
abolished the multiple Marxist or structuralist determinisms that tend to reduce it to a secondary and derived effect” (Sommerer, 2005, p. 194). The idea of political renewal proposed here is necessarily subject to the understanding that the political game is inscribed amidst heterogeneous discourses, albeit articulated to produce an attempt at coherent ‘totalization’.

A reflection on the interface of power and discourse and their effects on policies in the field of the Curriculum, in dialogue with Foucault (1970, 1972, 1981) and Laclau (1990, 1996, 2005), assumes situating it in the movement of social theories that assume, to different degrees, that “every social configuration is meaningful” (Laclau, 1990, p. 100). When defining discourse as the production of regularities in the dispersion and operation of power with a microphysical and productive notion, Foucault (1970, 1972, 1981) initiates and inspires this epistemic posture. After all, to this author, discourse “brings to light the action of imposed scarcity, with a fundamental power of affirmation. Scarcity and affirmation; ultimately, scarcity of affirmation, and not the continuous generosity of meaning, and not the monarchy of the signifier” (Foucault, 1981, p. 73).

This form of defining ‘power’ and ‘discourse’ paves the way for powerful dialogues with movements that invest in the radicalization of criticisms of essentialist readings of the social, often referred to as post-foundational (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Marchart, 2009; Retamozo, 2009, 2011). This radicalization, according to Retamozo (2011), undergoes an understanding of the role performed by the ontological dimensions in reflecting on the environment of the Social Sciences. In this approach, as shown to us by Marchart (2009), what is at stake in order to understand the processes of meaning has less to do with the denial of all foundations and more to do with the weakening of their ontological status. Rather than operating with metaphysical foundations whose meaning lies outside the action of language, this perspective incorporates and radicalizes the contingency as instituting the processes of meaning. It is not by chance that, to authors such as Sommerer (2005), in the post-foundational approach there is a politicization of discursive formation through its inclusion in a broader problem of social and ideological conflicts (Sommerer, 2005, p. 197).

As already highlighted in Gabriel (2015), it is the question of production and ontological density of these ‘contingent foundations’ that opens up the possibility for rethinking the political, with its logics and implications. It is about combatting the ‘naturalist’ approaches and/or those guided by a naïve realism of the social. It is also about going beyond perspective that view the social as historically constructed, concentrating on the permanent question of its definition. This means that the process of structuring any social order is a discursive operation that occurs amid a relational and differential system, in the permanent mobilization of two logics. The first, referred to by Laclau (1996) as ‘logic of equivalence’, is responsible for the weakening of the difference between elements, but without eliminating it completely. The second, which the same author referred to as ‘logic of difference’ (Laclau, 1996), produces a rupture, a radical cut that interrupts the ‘chain of equivalence’ produced by the first logic, thus emerging as a condition for the possibility of all meaning. After all, to Laclau (2005, p. 68), “something is what it is only through its differential relations to something else”.

The processes of defining/signifying the social are therefore the results of a
contingent articulation between the ‘logic of equivalence’ and the ‘logic of
difference’. In this perspective, the concepts of hegemony and antagonisms are
resignified. They become important tools for analyzing the post-foundational
perspective. The former, hegemony, comes to be understood as a defining,
discursive articulatory practice of the political game. According to Laclau and
Mouffe (2001), all hegemonic discourse is a particular that is hegemonized. It
becomes universal, through a contingent, precarious and constructed action on
possible negotiations. In this movement, a particular aspect assumes a universal
function, thus characterizing what these authors refer to as a hegemonic
relationship. It is in this perspective that we situate our dialogue with Foucault
(1981, pp. 52-53), recognizing that “discourse is not simply that which translates
struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there
is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized”.

The second concept, antagonism, emerges amid this movement of
hegemony/homogenization, investing in the need to close and suture the
processes of meaning. Reaffirming the impossibility of any definitive closure,
antagonisms reveal “the boundaries or political frontiers of a social formation, as
they show the points where identity can no longer be stabilized in a meaningful
system of differences, but is contested by forces which stand at the limit of that
order” (Howarth, 2000, p. 106). This means that, in disputes that emerge in the
language game, all discourse seeks to produce a boundary between elements
that are ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ a certain discursive formation. All that is ‘outside’ the
‘chain of equivalence’ of a given discourse becomes an excess that, in the
infinitude of the social, is signified as the ‘other’, antagonistic to each of the
elements articulated in that discourse. This allows us to state that, if antagonism
is necessary for the constructing or transitory stabilizing of all meaning, then all
signifieds of any kind is radically political (Marchart, 2009).

In this theoretical framework, hegemonize means provisionally setting and
universalizing a particular meaning through the production of ‘nodal points’ and,
simultaneously, of its antagonist other, expelling it from the hegemonic chain. It
also means producing devices for forgetting at the time of institution, of the
contingency of the entire social order. Likewise, as a fissured totality, the social
order/society is a terrain in which it is always possible to remember the
contingency, offering conceptual possibilities for thinking of opening the social.
The political struggle thus consists of struggles for meaning, i.e., constant
struggles for the sedimentation and reactivation of meanings of the social.

2. ‘Disciplinarized knowledge’: theoretical alternative to politicize
school culture

In Brazil, contemporary curricular policies, by investing in the hegemony of
a meaning of ‘quality education’, are rekindling the debates over the signifiers
‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’. In actions that focus on the construction
of a National Common Curricular Base (BNCC), for the reform of High School
Teaching or changes in the initial and ongoing training of basic education
teachers, for example, the selection of knowledge to be taught and disciplinary
organization have raised significant questions. These questions, in the different
texts of curricular policies, involve broader debates on education. These set other
processes in motion, which involve aspects of meaning such as the
universal/particular binomial and the notions of integration and flexibility of the curriculum.

A fertile ground for disputes regarding hegemony of the signifier of ‘quality education’, these policies express the capacity for a discursive formation in articulating within them multiple and heterogeneous flows of meaning. At the same time, as pointed out by Sommerer (2005), curricular policies succeed in being included in privileged institutional places for the utterance, control and legitimation of the discourses resulting from hegemonic operations that take place in specific contexts. Therefore, they operate in the sphere of the institute, addressing “a particular sector of activities, relationships and institutions” (Lefort, 1991, p. 187), for stability and sedimentation of meanings.

With the signifier ‘quality education’ as a ‘nodal point’, these kinds of curricular policies mobilize and articulate the logics of equivalence and difference that underlie any process of meaning. In other words, the possibility of producing a coherent and rational discourse on ‘quality education’ necessarily implies the exclusion of other meanings from this discursive totality. These other meanings come to occupy the place of the ‘constitutive exterior’, which in turn articulates different elements that form instances in the chain that defines a form of ‘non-quality education’. This exteriority enables the negative confirmation of the consistency of the discourse on ‘quality education’. It simultaneously reaffirms the instability of the whole order of the discourse.

The hegemonic project surrounding the meaning of ‘quality education’, which has in its curricular policies one of the most powerful devices of sedimentation or stabilization, is always partial, precarious and provisory. The permanent presence of instability means recognizing the performative strength of the logic of the ‘political’, which enables remembering and signaling that which always escapes each and every attempt at political or social domestication (Marchart, 2009). Therefore, the analytical exercise proposed here operates with the instability of every theoretical framework and its direct implication for the sedimentation and/or reactivation of meanings. As mentioned above, we center specifically on two signifiers (‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’) that participate in this process of structuring/destructuring of a discursive order regarding the idea of ‘quality education’.

It is in this perspective that we produce the notion of ‘disciplinarized knowledge’, understood here as resulting from an articulatory (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001) and, simultaneously, alchemical (Popkewitz, 1998) practice. In the first case, by coining the expression, we distance ourselves from the approaches that reduce/stifle the terms ‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’ to a single theoretical matrix. At the same time, we recognize the effects of the game of language that ‘blur’ and reconfigure the defining boundaries of both terms. In the second case, we perceive ‘disciplinarized knowledge’ as an articulatory practice that is produced in a kind of alchemy in which the knowledge of the sciences is being crossed by other discourses, amid the effects of power and modes of government that constitute us as students and teachers. After all, “the system of reason that orders school subjects and its modes of learning embodies principles that are not merely about learning content. The principles generated in making school subjects are processes of governing reflection and action through pedagogical rules and standards” (Popkewitz, 2010, p. 413).
Coping with the struggles over meaning in the field of the Curriculum regarding these two signifiers has been marked by a swinging movement that is historically crossed by the process of meaning of the term science. This movement produces effects of power in the constitution of school culture. Within these effects, it interests us to highlight those that most directly affect the understanding of producing, distributing and organizing that which has been legitimized and validated as an object of teaching in Brazilian basic education. We work with the hypothesis that the way the field of the Curriculum has handled this crossing tends to weaken the political role of science in the democratization process of Brazilian public schools.

In this swinging movement, meanings have been attributed to the notions of ‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’ articulated to the signifier of science. These notions translate the inscriptions in different theoretical matrices that feed the debates in the field of the Curriculum. Consequently, we shift from a denial of the political and heuristic potential of both terms and come to perceive the affirmation of their centrality in reflections on school culture.

One of the directions of the swinging and oscillating movement shows that, in the debates on the ‘post’ perspectives of the notions of ‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’, there are frequent deletions. In the case of ‘school knowledge’, this deletion occurs as the meaning of the term tends to be reduced to the notion of ‘subject content’, which has been negatively qualified in these curricular debates. This reductionist perspective contributes to the hegemony of other signifiers, with the term ‘school knowledge’ acting as a ‘constitutive exterior’ of ‘other’ curricula, investing in the interface between culture, difference and power, questioning the hegemony of science in schooling processes. This investment allows the production of coherence amidst a system of dispersion in which moments of different discursive formations are mobilized articulately. In this process, cultural and pedagogical discourses are reactivated in the definition of schooling, with signifiers such as identity, difference and culture in dialogue with meanings such as competence, skill and value.

Likewise, the term ‘school subject’ emerges in these curricular debates guided by ‘post’ perspectives, in an exterior position. This position is what has enabled meaning, through the mobilization of articulatory practices, which can be referred to as ‘non-disciplinary’. The hegemony of particular meanings of ‘non-disciplinary’ are part of a radicalization of the criticisms of disciplinary organization, often understood as a modern illuminist expression. However, here, unlike the way in which the notion of ‘school knowledge’ is deleted, the signifier ‘subject’ continues naming, in an explicit way, the ‘non-disciplinary’. This occurs through the addition of a varied set of prefixes to the signifier, producing terms such ‘interdisciplinary’, ‘multidisciplinary’ and ‘transdisciplinary’ to assign a name to that which, in school culture, lies outside the disciplinary organization.

The other direction of the swinging movement is the centrality that the notions of ‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’ assume as an object of study in critical curricular theories. This centrality does not mean operating with utterances that necessarily make both notions positive. On the contrary, they have been placed in check in research concerned with the historicity, non-neutrality, non-universality and subjectivity of the processes that constitute school culture.
In this movement, what matters is denaturalizing the processes of producing ‘school knowledge’ and its hegemonic organization in ‘disciplinarized’ curricula. To achieve this, boundaries are established between the critical and the non-critical, which reverberate in the definitions of ‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’. Here, in the political game of definition, both terms participate as moments in the ‘chain of equivalence’, which has the signifier critical as a ‘nodal point’. This signifier acts to recognize and problematize the asymmetrical relationships of power that affect the production of ‘school knowledge’ and its socialization in the ‘subject’ format. This practicality operates in two directions. In the first direction, the criticisms tend to make the terms ‘knowledge’ and ‘culture’ equivalent as a discursive strategy to combat universalist visions of the world. The use of the plural of both terms (‘knowledges’ and ‘cultures’) is part of this formulation. In the second direction, we perceive to what extent the criticisms recover and value a particular meaning of ‘knowledge’, which occurs in opposition to other possible meanings produced in the interface between knowledge and culture.

It is important to underline that, in the swinging movement mentioned here, meanings of science are mobilized and updated in the notions of ‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’, amidst wider discourses regarding ‘quality education’. In utterances that tend to deny and/or delete the two notions, the signifier science condenses the varied criticisms formulated to question a particular discourse of a scientific nature. These questions, which have been raised in terms of modern science and/or guided by technical rationality, echo and produce effects in the signification processes of the term content. This assumes, therefore, the place of the ‘constitutive exterior’ in marking the boundary that defines what is and what is not schooling. In this movement, ‘scientism’ and ‘contentism’ draw closer together, positioned as links in the same ‘chain of equivalence’.

In utterances in which the notions of ‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’ assume a position of centrality, the articulation with the signifier science occurs, in certain works, through exclusion from the ‘chain of equivalence’ that draws the terms knowledge and culture closer together. This is the case, for instance, of utterances that invest in the democratization of the public school by updating tensions between binomials such as scientific knowledge and popular culture, school subject and socio-cultural projects, and school and community. It is also the case of other studies that associate the signifiers science and content in the recovery of the aforementioned notions. In this perspective, a metonymic operation occurs through which a particular meaning of science, linked to the condition of the universal, is assumed as the only knowledge capable of producing critical citizens in the school environment. As explained by Gabriel (2013, p. 51):

In these readings, scientific knowledge, whether perceived as the result of research or in its school version, generally referred to as ‘contents’, invariably assumes a position of crystalized, unquestionable truth, produced in the western world by illuminist reason. This previously established fixation is at the base of the processes of signification that dispute school projects and are politically appropriated by different groups that form demands for equality and difference.

Investing in productions that ‘blur’ the boundaries between the critical and
post-critical, we have produced categories of analysis that permit an understanding of articulatory practices in a less dichotomous way. In this shift, we draw closer to Thomas Popkewitz (1998, p. 39). In his dialogue with Michel Foucault, he has operated with the idea that “the scaffolding of the binaries (...) does not seem as divisions but as a continuum of values in which one side of the distinctions is privileged as the composite ‘makes’ for what is ‘good’ and normal”. ‘Disciplinarized knowledge’, as a category of analysis, constitutes an effect of this theoretical rapprochement. In this concept, the notions of ‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’ are joined, producing another utterance for the interface between science, content and culture. This interface shifts the antagonistic frontiers set in frameworks of intelligibility, which include critical and post-critical studies.

Exploring the signifier ‘disciplinarized knowledge’ in the logic of the binary structure proposed by Popkewitz (1998) thus means reconfiguring the boundaries that define what is and what is not schooling. This reconfiguration involves the reactivation of contingency by processes of setting meanings for science, culture and content. It also undergoes the production of other discursive articulations between these terms in processes that no longer place them in antagonistic positions in the definition of schooling. The configuration proposed here, therefore, shifts away from visions in favor of content or that include ‘content-phobia’ (Veiga-Neto, 2012).

Produced amidst articulatory practices (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001) and alchemical practices (Popkewitz, 1998), the notion of ‘disciplinarized knowledge’ is crossed by different flows of meanings that emerge in varied discursive contexts. It is in this situation that we perceive, for instance, the political function of the flows of scientism in the construction of other critical readings of the social. It is not a question of reinforcing hierarchies and/or oppositions between the binomial of science and culture. It has to do with perceiving that the flows of scientism that are part of the defining chain of ‘disciplinarized knowledge’ carry the marks of disputes regarding the regimes of truth that are set in the theoretical matrices in which scientific knowledge is produced in different disciplinary fields.

We argue that this approach points to the possibility of a curricular analysis that focuses on perceived political conflicts as part of any political/social configuration. It enables the double movement of articulation that lies at the base of the production of the contingent social foundation to be captured. If the articulation is successful and becomes hegemonic, it “tends to vanish and the traces of the original contingency to fade. In this way, the instituted tends to assume the form of a mere objective presence” (Laclau, 1990, p. 34). However, if the sediments are reactivated, there is a “temporalization of space” or an “extension of the field of the possible”, with a moment of reactivation with a process of undoing meanings (Marchart, 2009, p. 185).

The movement undertaken in this text gambles on this possibility of undoing meanings of the notions of ‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’, reactivating them in the signifier of ‘disciplinarized knowledge’. As discussed in Gabriel & Ferreira (2012), it is not about rehabilitating scientistic curricula, let alone about ignoring the relevant theoretical contributions of post-critical studies. By delving deeper into this theoretical process, we are interested in seeking new definitions that reaffirm the political role of the adjective ‘school’. After all, when we choose to use the signifier ‘disciplinarized knowledge’, we are resignifying the
role of science in the broader struggles for the democratization of Brazilian public schools.

**Final considerations**

Systems of social relations, which are understood as articulate sets of discourses, are always political constructions involving the construction of antagonisms and the exercise of power. Moreover, because social systems have a fundamentally political character, they are rendered vulnerable to those forces that are excluded in the process of political constitution (Howarth, 2000, p. 104).

The line of argument throughout this text is situated in the theoretical movement in which the statement cited above as an epigraph is included. In our research, we chose to look at curricular texts, produced in different policy contexts, as devices of power that articulate multiple discourses and produce effects of sedimentation in their own understanding of democratic public schools. This posture has authorized us to work with the understanding of school culture as a discursive order that is structured unequally and contingently as the result of permanent political struggles. These struggles are manifested around the disputes for the establishment of particular meanings of school, knowledge and subject in detriment of other meanings that could be assigned to these terms.

This text, through its involvement in the struggles to stabilize the boundaries of *what is* and *what is not* schooling, sought to intensify hegemonic processes of signification in curricular texts, investing in the shifting of the boundaries that support them. The strategies used here problematized the hegemonic discursive arrangements with regard to expressions such as ‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’, and simultaneously contributed to producing other hegemonies and other antagonisms.

The first strategy focused on analyzing these discursive arrangements produced in the curricular contexts of different theoretical matrices. The aim was to problematize the hegemonic meanings of school and their effects on the sedimentation of a particular meaning of ‘quality’ in the educational field. In this perspective, we focused exactly on the differential elements that tend to be excluded from these hegemonic processes and are placed in the ‘constitutive exterior’. As we sought to explore throughout our argument, occupying this place means exercising a discursive function of offering conditions to enable the accomplishment of the signification process and reaffirm its vulnerability. We worked by betting on the political potential of the perceived boundary as a discursive place for the possible reactivation of the contingency and, therefore, the opening for the production of other political readings of the social and, in particular, Brazilian public school. It is important to highlight that this investment in the fissures of hegemonic discourses or the undoing of meanings occurs in a national context of multiple ‘crises’, creating a potential for the political game of definition. The hegemonic model of ‘quality public school’ forged in a modern illuminist setting shows strong signs of exhaustion, thus permitting an “extension of the field of the possible” (Marchart, 2009, p. 185).

In this first movement of analysis of the processes of signification regarding the expressions ‘school knowledge’ and ‘school subject’, it was possible to identify that despite the theoretical matrices, the signifier science and/or its derivatives occupies a strategic place in the production of these curricular
policies. Meaning as a panacea capable of resolving the problems of the low quality of teaching or as a source of all the problems that explain the isolation and silencing of the school in the face of the demands of difference and rights that challenge it in our era. The signifier science occupies a crucial and strategic place in the political processes for the sedimentation of the meaning of school.

In the second analysis, we sought to explore the elasticity of this aforementioned field of the possible by investing in the expression 'disciplinarized knowledge'. Through this expression, our intention was to offer conceptual possibilities to operate in another way in the interface between scientific knowledge and the democratic school. Resulting from alchemical practices, 'disciplinarized knowledge', as it has been studied in our research, presents heuristic potentials that strengthen the meanings of 'democratic public school' that we consider worth investigating. We highlight two arguments that support the political project regarding school defended here.

The first argument has to do with the fact that it strengthens a particular meaning of school that incorporates its role in the production of the relationships established with knowledge. After all, as pointed out by Biesta (2012), the school as a social institution is a space for qualification, socialization and subjectivation. The reactivation of this meaning of school seems important to us when it addresses thinking of it in the environment of an unequal social order such as ours, in which knowledge is an unevenly distributed cultural asset. We understand that this way of taking part in the political game of definition that surrounds the interface between school and knowledge mean equally strengthening the singular form of how school culture participates in the struggles to construct a project for democratic society.

The second argument refers to the role performed by scientific knowledge in this qualification process that undergoes the establishment of a critical relationship with knowledge. We defend that the undeniable place of this type of knowledge in the construction of a democratic school. When we use the term 'disciplinarized knowledge' we intend to invest in the articulation between criticality and science, which are often viewed as dichotomous poles in school culture. We are not advocating the neutrality of scientific knowledge, of the belief in absolute truths, nor are we advocating maintaining the privileged place occupied in school curricula by 'hard sciences'. Science 'in and of itself' is neither liberating nor oppressive. It is what teaching institutions desire or allow to be done with it. We are betting that the presence of a meaning of knowledge produced from the regimes of truth and the rules of production of different disciplinary fields that reference the production of school culture has its place in the instance of the defining chain of school. Thus, this text can be viewed as yet another play in the political game that is engaged in the field of Brazilian education concerning the definition of a quality democratic public school.

Notes
1. This work was supported by the National Council of Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and the Carlos Chagas Filho Foundation for the Aid of Research in the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ).
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Received: 05 July 2016
Accepted: 11 October 2016