

AIMING AT EDUCATION: NO ORDER, NO PROGRESS

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Abstract: *The essay analyses policies for Brazilian education with the purpose of reconfigurations underwent by labor, in the current neoliberal phase of capitalism; particularly, due to having always attributed to labor an opposite character to that of this ideology. The State offers guarantees for the production and reproduction of capital in situations of deepened crisis and transforms social rights, such as education and health, into marketable services. In this perspective, professors experience at universities a highly competitive and threatening atmosphere of loss of rights, which deploys control, threatens autonomy, and limits freedom of professorship, which is founded upon freedom of thought and of expression. The conflict they experience while working, now under surveillance and possibly criminalization, produces a state of insecurity and fear which may result in emotional disorders or depression. How to resist to this rationale and to the resulting processes of subjectivation is what we seek to point out.*

Keywords: *Neoliberal Policies and Education; Education and Alienation; Rationality and Subjectivation;*

1. Introduction

At the moment we find ourselves, discussions about the totality-subjectivity relation are of paramount relevance, and we will seek to expand on it. Especially when this relation, historically and dialectically conceived, is transformed into the primordial target of capitalism in its neoliberal logic, which seeks to impose a view of reality that surgically extricates consciousness and content, preventing or severely limiting subjects' knowledge of totality.

Since economic transformations imposed by the crisis of capital, which affect us in the most diverse areas, are now turning to the appropriation of public funds and threatening the removal of guarantees provided by the State to ensure basic rights as a counterpart for the maintenance of capital, it becomes necessary to overcome this situation, as implementation of such measures directly affects the working class, at the same time this class is called on to collaborate. To demonstrate such a contradiction is a latent condition in education, as Marx (2008) states, that "all science would be superfluous if the form of manifestation and the essence of things coincided immediately" (p. 1080) . This is what renders such a discussion imperative.

Dardot and Laval (2016) had already identified that capitalism and its cyclical crisis impose changes that lead the State to intervene in order to preserve its profits (p.310). Thusly, education becomes a target of transformations aligned to the model of neoliberal restructuring which involves the State itself. Such transformations will demand new forms of adaptation to be deployed in previously absent sociability processes.

The analysis carried out in this essay looks to present the methods of reproduction of capital, in its neoliberal phase, deployed in the educational process to which us, professors, are subjected in the present. In discussing how professors' subjectivity is built in and through work relationships established within the routine of actions related to teaching, research, and extension, through the interactions between subjects involved in this relationship – professor, student and knowledge – situated in contexts of fierce competition, where disputes establish a high level of complexity and impose increasing personal and professional demands, it is also

revealed the attempt to render innocuous the very educational action which should permeate the relationship between university and society, immersed as they are in the world of pseudoconcreteness and of the alienated everyday life, as defined by Kosic (1976).

When analyzing policies, projects, and guidelines created in the field of legal regulatory framework that seeks to discipline the education and the professional conduct of professors, we see an evident attack in the guise of interference that will occur in actions of moral order with the purpose of aligning them – education and teaching action – to the model of society that restricts rights and aims to subject individuals to adaptation, conforming them to this reality.

Omnipresent alienation is the “subjective counterpart” engendered. It is what needs, therefore, to be the target of “critical self-reflection” as a possibility for rescuing a culture that allows “men to educate one another”, as stated by Adorno (1996) and Paulo Freire (2005). Start typing the body of your paper here. Papers will outline the issue addressed and research questions, the literature and background to the topic, the analytical frame, the methodology and the research results.

2. Hammered discourse.

Incessant repetition of discourse without the necessary substantiation has been the method used to inculcate ideas devoid of internal logical coherence and whose objective is to gain the adhesion of subjects in adopting attitudes that are often placed in opposition to the subjects’ own interests, in a process leading to alienation from themselves and from reality.

Such a mechanism – alienation – is well known. It has presented itself in our context, however, with such an exacerbation that it borders on irrationality, being comparable to what was previously experienced during Nazi Germany.

Man has literally changed the face of the earth, and wherever we look, it might be said, we can no longer fail to see the human mark. But, at the same time, along with this moving enchantment in the face of the human capacity to “transform the world and transform itself,” Marx also found its terrible shadow: the realization that this same man – at this point, in his analysis, multiplied by the infinity of individuals – was also lost in history, “dehumanized” and “denaturalized”; in a word, “alienated” (from nature, from himself and from his own creations). “Alienation” (which has in Marx the double meaning of “estrangement” and loss of consciousness)... (Barros, 2011, p. 239).

I now take Bill 7180/14, titled “School Without Political Party” – from Congressman Erivelton Santana (PSC-BA), archived in 12/11/18 and reintroduced on 02/19/19 upon request from Congressman Alan Rick (DEM-AC), after incorporating recommendations presented to its previously archived version – as a document to be analyzed, serving as evidence of an attack in the field of legal regulatory framework that seeks to discipline the professional conduct of teachers and professors whose interference will occur in actions of the moral sphere, in order to align them with a model of society that restricts rights and subjects individuals to an adaptation conformed to that reality.

School Without Political Party uses a “language close to common sense, resorting to simplistic dichotomies that reduce complex issues to false alternatives” and dissipate through *memes*, “images accompanied by brief sayings”, by four main elements: first, a conception of schooling; second, a disqualification of the teacher; third, fascist discursive strategies; and, lastly, defense of the total power of parents over their children. It contains fascist discursive strategies through “teacher-oriented analogies that dehumanize the teacher,” treating him as “a monster, a parasite, a vampire,” in the form of offensive *memes* picturing Gramsci and Paulo Freire. They install a “climate of denunciation” and “hate speech” (Ciavata, 2017, p.9).

It is necessary to emphasize that Bill *School without Political Party* is characterized by its creators as being nonpartisan in character, without ideological or religious ties. Its destination, however, is specific: public schools, since it states:

Article 3º, Paragraph 1. Confessional and private schools whose educational practices are based on moral, religious, or ideological conceptions, principles, and values shall obtain from the parents or guardians of students, at the time of enrollment, express authorization for the transmission of contents identified with said principles, values, and conceptions. (Santa Barbara, Cunha, Bicalho, 2017, p.108)

It is impossible not to observe, beyond its destination, the motivation behind this. The capital, in its ferocity, now advances to denying the right to an education which enables the working class to benefit from such a right in some way other than to submit to and be subject to domination. This will, further, render the working class liable for its own failure, even if the only knowledge it has access to is that which allows for no social insertion other than subalternity.

3. Governmentality and Subjectivity.

Dardot and Laval (2016) state: “The neoliberal man is the *competitive* man, wholly immersed in world competition” (p. 322). Hence the norm being above everything; it must be faithfully observed, for obedience or disobedience will serve as parameters for normality or abnormality. As governmentality, neoliberalism aims at control of the individual becoming his own desire. “He must work for his own efficacy, for intensification of his effort as if this conduct were his own, as if it were commanded from within by an imperious order of his own desire, to which he cannot resist” (Dardot & Laval, 2016, p. 327).

For that purpose, internally prompted controls are as strongly installed as external ones, which transform each individual into a control agent of other people’s behavior, capable of understanding this action as a benefit to the effective functioning of society. This is what this project installed: control over the action of teachers and professors, now coming from the exterior, by parents and students who oversee content ministered and positions adopted in their educational activities.

The Bill is entirely synchronized with the model of rationality to which neoliberalism conforms. Individuals come to govern themselves and others, as institutions that maintain the machinery that governs them.

Far from being “neutral,” the managerial reform of public action directly attempts against *the democratic logic of social citizenship*, reinforcing social inequalities in the distribution of aid and in the access to resources in matters of employment, health, and education, it reinforces social logics of exclusion which engender an increasing number of “sub-citizens” and “non-citizens.” (Dardot & Laval, 2016, p.380).

According to the authors, this is possible if we understand that “the challenge on social rights is closely related to the challenge on cultural and moral foundations, not just political ones, of liberal democracies” (p. 382). Thus education would be fertile ground for cultivating the corporate subjectivity in which, beyond individualism and competition, there would be no more space for the existence of solidarity values once present in liberal democracy.

What is underway with this process is the survival of a system in the face of its crisis, even though sustained by unreason. Subjects in this condition experience situations of success and failure in which the proportion of satisfaction does not allow for balance, since resulting sociability also promotes the weakening of solidarity and citizenship. But if “death” is what is presented to those who are reluctant to create an identity with power, the same can also be experienced by those subjected to it, as this power is nourished by those who sustain

it. Such an existence does not combine power with freedom and undermines the autonomy of individuals.

What is seen in the case of *Bill School Without Political Party* is its contribution in the sense of seeking identification with a model of schooling which removes from education the knowledge that allows for development of critical instruction and that respects historically constituted segments and social processes as phenomena to be analyzed. The imposition of absolute truths and homogenous standards of conduct are in themselves the negation of what they claim to be their nature, contrary to the indoctrination of ideological, political, partisan, and religious principles. Combating over-alienation and naturalization therein is the challenge we face.

Separation from the ideologically created discourse that distorts reality has been the practice adopted to win adherence from those who will be affected by the changes in reality.

3.1. Neoliberal (i)morality produces accounting subjectivity.

The rationale which accompanies a historical moment, as explanation and justification of a dominant reason, can serve both for its naturalization and for its overcoming. Reason, this human faculty, is what allows knowledge of the universal, the necessary, the values, the ideas and the ideals, which guide the existence of different rationales in face of different interests. Thus, we can comprehend the need and/or interest of arrangements that articulate them as to favor groups and organizations around particular cultures and societies. This also makes it possible to understand that such rationales compete with each other, looking to guide different forms of intervention in reality.

In 2017, the World Bank Group released a report prepared by request from the Brazilian federal government, titled “Um ajuste justo: análise da eficiência e equidade do gasto público no Brasil” [A fair adjustment: analysis of efficiency and equity of public spending in Brazil] (WB, 2017). In view of the limits set for this essay, the report will be analyzed only with regard to the considerations made on education and the resulting recommendations. The objective of the WB study was “to carry out an in-depth analysis of government spending, identify alternatives to reduce fiscal deficit to a sustainable level and, at the same time, consolidate social gains achieved in previous decades” (p. 1). The need for this would be justified by the search for solutions to address the roots of Brazil’s fiscal problems, which are due to increasing public spending over the last two decades and to the constitutional constraint on spending established by Constitutional Amendment 95 (2016), which limits the use of resources in the public sector over the next 20 years (p. 7).

The document readily displays in its first lines a statement that announces the diagnosis: “The Brazilian Government spends more than it can, and it spends badly” (p. 7); then, the report presents its recommendations to solve identified problems. In making such an assertion, it is assumed that data were analyzed after handling based on technical-scientific criteria, thus proving the reliability of results. As such, these results, when compared with other data of universal representation, would corroborate ideas and ideals, and serve as basis for the perspective (political, social, cultural) to be adopted in the form of intervention in reality.

What is seen, in the document, is the use of obvious findings, such as that “the federal government’s expenditures mostly go to higher education”, and that this is due to primary and secondary education being under the responsibility of municipalities and states, respectively. Nonetheless, it recognizes that the federal government also allocates resources to subnational systems by means of budgetary transfers, in addition to financing. “...public universities and technical and vocational education and training programs. [...] A growing share of federal expenditure on education is linked to financial assistance offered to students attending private higher education institutions” (p.123).

An analysis of higher education funding by Castro and Corbucci (2004), published in *Boletim de Políticas Sociais* [Social Policies Bulletin] from the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA), justifies this condition as financing being a key element in the formulation and implementation of public policies – thus determining the limits of coverage levels and the quality of the supply of goods and services provided. According to the authors, such is the complexity surrounding this issue that it requires legal-institutional regulation for determining principles, establishing regulatory frameworks between federative entities and their competencies for establishing the limits of public-private relationships, among others (p. 148).

They further argue that the Union's responsibility towards higher education institutions takes into account the greater complexity inherent to this level – which has a higher cost compared to basic education – and that, in the case of Brazil, such attribution is determined by the Federal Constitution (*idem*).

The authors (*idem*) are incisive in stating that *per capita* spending, in any country in the world, is always greater with higher education. Therefore, this is how the expenditure is configured and, in relation to Brazil, the difference is accentuated by a particular situation: “Reinforcing the understanding that the problem of Brazilian education financing does not lie in the fact that expenditure with higher education is excessive, but that investments in basic education are insufficient.” (p. 149)

The World Bank (2017) presents a sequence of facts such as: spending on higher education is increasing; the average expenditure per student is high in federal universities and institutes; the majority of enrollments is in private universities, not in public ones; and the average cost per student in public universities is two or three times that of private universities (131-38).

It states that spending on higher education is deeply retrograde, because it benefits “mostly students from the wealthier families” (p. 136). It finds that such inequality is aggravated by the fact that admission into public universities occurs by means of a highly competitive examination, for which the students of wealthier families are better prepared and, therefore, stand a better chance at being successful when compared to those from low-income families.

Next, the WB (2017) maintains that the income of students who have graduated from public universities is high, even considering the decrease observed in recent years, and thus, because the members of wealthier families are those who benefit from public higher education – and who, consequently, will increase their future income – it concludes that gratuity in higher education is responsible for perpetuating inequality in the country (136).

3.2. Progress or regress?

Solutions for this situation point in two directions according to World Bank (2017): 1) to limit spending per student down to the levels of the most efficient universities, making these institutions reconsider their cost structure and/or seek resources elsewhere (p. 137); and 2) to introduce school fees, facilitating financing for students who cannot afford tuition, by combining the use of FIES and PROUNI, the latter as an alternative for the poorest 40% of the population. According to the report, the combination of such measures would generate an economy for the federal budget in the order of 0.5% of the GDP (p. 138).

Arguments are sequenced in the document so to reach the conclusion that a profound inefficiency marks the way in which actions are carried out in the Brazilian educational system, including budget distribution. Consequently, such inefficiency generates results that only confirm its ineffectiveness. Or even more seriously, this inefficiency would be the main factor responsible for perpetuating one of the gravest structural problems in our country: social inequality.

Correlations presented throughout the document are disassembled by Amaral (2017), who demonstrates the absence of criteria adopted to substantiate such claims, rendering them unsustainable and thus highlighting the “irresponsibility” with which they were handled. In contrast to the argument, Amaral presents data extracted from official sources that support his harsh criticism capable of dismantling the fallacy.

Leher (2017) authored a paper – “Em defesa da universidade pública e do direito constitucional de gratuidade” [In defense of the public university and the constitutional right to gratuity] – in which, upon observing some of the studies carried out by the World Bank to indicate social policy reforms necessary for several nations, he observes:

Is it possible that the WB was wrong in its forecasts, having an expressive staff, many of which with relevant academic background? The question is disconcerting, for, in fact, there are countless “cases of failure.” Many studies (3) allow us to conclude, simply, that the Bank recommends what is of interest to the world power bloc. Probably, therefore, it does not even rigorously base its recommendations, neither in technical-scientific nor in ethical grounds (p. 1).

In which logic, then, is the World Bank’s document founded? Whom does it serve?

Brief Considerations.

It is inevitable to observe the production of a neoliberal rationale and subjectivity. The competitiveness that turns into the very *raison d’être* of the market is also the *raison d’être* of the subject – annulled as a being, but reconstructed as a company that dictates how to be. Existence is possible only in this condition, by allowing the idea of participating in the process of organizing life in such terms.

The current trend of appropriation of public funds by the capital, which marks the neoliberal phase and its crisis, increases the severity of attacks launched in two directions: social rights and nature. The State, to which the capital always resorts in order to ensure the guarantees of its survival, is now called upon to quit providing the working class with its basic rights, which are then marketed with its incentive.

In order for such a change to take place, with the expropriation of rights conquered by the working class, a series of mechanisms is triggered, in order not only to prevent the expected reactions, but fundamentally to gain the adhesion of those who will be affected by such measures, which is not an easy task.

It is necessary to co-opt those who will be affected by such a loss, a situation that can be characterized as a regression to stages already overcome in the development of the struggle between capital and labor. Thus, one can understand what the World Bank’s proposal for the adoption of Economic Adjustment represents, with respect to the use of public resources for Brazilian education and the Bill *School Without Political Party*, which again threaten educational action in the public sphere.

Such measures seek to render this action innocuous, to prevent knowledge from being built to develop a critical understanding of reality by subjects. In the same sense, it can be considered that the Bill *School Without Political Party* aims to impose alienation, based on absolute truths imposed unidirectionally aiming to accomplish what it set out to deny: indoctrination.

At the same time it reinforces individualism and the patrolling posture among subjects involved in the educational process, it promotes its own annulment of the educational process and the resulting construction of subjects.

Such a contradiction may serve to affirm what it claims to deny. The condition that power, placed from the outside into the subject, to be assumed by him as his own, holds within itself the possibility of denying the falsehood of this identification between subject and entrepreneurial market. It also creates a condition of rupture with its isolation caused by

exacerbated competition to affirm the need for constituting collective subjects directed towards reaffirmation and defense of the existence of public assets that can be shared by them.

This seems to be the greatest challenge in counteracting such a decline in the process of human sociability. The possibility of humanization that can only be achieved in truly human exchanges, among men who lapidate their essence in the daily construction of relationships – where he finds that the existence of the other is what allows himself to exist.

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