


EDUCATION, NEOLIBERALISM AND SUBJECTIVITIES: NECESSARY INTERFACES

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to reflect on the implications of neoliberal rationality in Brazilian society, with emphasis on the transformation of education into a commodity under the logic of capital. The theoretical foundation focuses on authors such as Harvey (2008), Mascaro (2013), and Dardot and Laval (2016), who discuss neoliberalism as a discursive hegemony that alters subjectivities and redefines the role of the State. Methodologically, this is an exploratory study with a qualitative approach, which analyzes the state reforms in Brazil from the 1990s onwards and the role of the business community in education. The results indicate that the State has gone from being an executor to a regulator of public policies by promoting public-private partnerships and encouraging the commodification of education. Neoliberal rationality imposes a "governance of subjectivities", guiding individual conduct according to principles of competition and efficiency. The business community assumes a central role in education in order to promote values such as employability and entrepreneurship, moving away from the conception of education as a social right. It is concluded that neoliberalism re-signifies education as a commodity, weakening its humanitarian character. Resistance to this rationality requires critical awareness and political engagement, especially in the educational field, to claim education as a public good.

Keywords: Education. Neoliberal rationality. Governance of subjectivities. Brazilian society.

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INTRODUCTION

[...] neoliberalism became hegemonic as a modality of discourse and began to affect modes of thought so widely that it became incorporated into the everyday ways of many people interpreting, living, and understanding the world (Harvey, 2008, p. 13).

This article begins with a quote from Harvey (2008) about neoliberalism. It is noteworthy that the author characterizes it as a modality of discourse, thus constituting a hegemony, a belief capable of affecting our daily practices, our thoughts, and our ideas. Later, Harvey is emphatic in pondering that, as it is a modality of discourse based on the establishment of a hegemony, neoliberalism guides interpretations, experiences, and understandings about the world, society, and the State. It is precisely through this information that one arrives at the notion that neoliberal precepts are condensed into a doctrine that alters subjectivities, to the point of reproducing discourses that excessively privilege individual life, the incentive to competition, the maximum of results, that is, there is also the consolidation of the idea that privatizations are necessary to aim for the long-awaited quality. As a result, the notion of the common good is increasingly attenuated so that the consensus prevails that the public is ineffective and unfruitful. In this sense, the concept of education as a public good loses its essence, which leads us to a very worrying reality: education has become a commodity, a product, leading to the question: how much is education worth, after all?

Given the above, Mascaro (2013, p. 124) makes significant reflections on neoliberalism when he postulates that "it is not a policy of capital against states, it is a policy of capital passing through states. The degrees of liberalization are undertaken through state economic policies." From this, it can be seen that, in the post-Fordist development model, the number of occurrences of goods affected is higher than the number of occurrences of operations carried out in the Fordist model. By exploiting new technologies, ranging from electronics to biology to genetics, nature seizes commodities as a broader constraint. In a globalized context, in which capitalism advances with the advent of Industry 4.0, and if we consider, above all, all the complexities experienced in the pandemic caused by covid-19, education receives new contours, being, for example, 'platformized' and 'neoliberalized' with the discourse of quality, management by results, and efficiency proclaimed by business institutions, which reinforce concepts, such as employability, entrepreneurship, skills to compete, among others.

What needs to be considered at this point is that the State involves social negotiations. There are power relations, but there are also power counter-relations. The State is not an abstract entity; It is an institution captured by a class that will use its power to impose its interests unilaterally on the whole society, but always in a conflictual and contradictory relationship. The State plays different roles, but we must think: what is at stake when we consider economic interests? Therefore, to think about the idea of society is, undoubtedly, to think of a system of relations, which are ways of existing of the social being. Society is always the product of the reciprocal action of men. It is an objective and subjective relationship; it is individual and collective. We produce the conditions. At this core,

[...] the state does not represent a power that hovers above society; on the contrary, it is a political expression of the class structure inherent in production. Although it is positioned as a representative of the general interests, the constitutional State is not above conflicts, but deeply involved in them, that is, it is inserted and defined by the conflicts and contradictions of material life, being simultaneously a factor of cohesion and social regulation (Carvalho, 2016, p. 82).

We are notoriously in agreement with Carvalho (2016), especially regarding the meaning that the State is equivalent to a political structure, which overlaps with society but is part of it. Thus, it can be inferred that, in a situation of class struggle, it is shaped by the State, which shapes customs, ways of life, *habitus*, and forms of sociability. The State is not only an apparatus of repression but also social constitution, influencing the constitution of subjectivities. In this way, neoliberalism engenders the notion that the educational field is the central space for the formation of values and the development of basic attitudes in the face of the new social conditions of capitalist expansion.

In view of the postulates discussed, the objective of this article is to reflect on the implications of neoliberal rationality in Brazilian society, with emphasis on the transformation of education into a commodity under the logic of capital. To this end, the theorizations of Harvey (2008; 2011), Mascaro (2013), Dardot and Laval (2016), Carvalho (2016; 2020), Peroni and Lima (2020) and other references related to the aspects that comprise the expansion of capitalism from neoliberalism are used, such as partnerships between the public and the private, the constitution of the neoliberal subject, among other subjects. Methodologically, this is an exploratory study with a qualitative approach (Gil, 2008).

Furthermore, it is appropriate to highlight how this article is organized. In this Introduction, the first section of the text, the theme is contextualized in order to expose the objective of the article. In the second section, the theoretical foundation regarding the specificities of the reform of the State apparatus in Brazil and the legitimation of neoliberalism is presented. In the third section, a critical discussion is established about neoliberal rationality, with a view to thinking about its hegemonic power and producer of changes in subjectivities, as well as about the performance of the business community in the educational field, based on reflections that are considered central to the investigation. The fourth and last section is dedicated to the conclusions in view of all the explanations made.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Neoliberalism is the *reason for contemporary capitalism*, for capitalism unencumbered by its archaizing references and fully assumed as a historical construction and general norm of life. Neoliberalism can be defined as the set of discourses, practices, and devices that determine a new mode of government of men according to the universal principle of competition (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 15, emphasis added).

Masterfully, this section begins with a postulate by Dardot and Laval (2016), when they show, in principle, that neoliberalism is assumed as a historical construction and general norm of life. To this end, it is pertinent to go through its legitimation to understand its nuances. As in other Latin American countries, the process of legitimizing neoliberalism in Brazil was driven by the reform of the State apparatus², recommended by the Structural Adjustment Policies (PAE) of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Thus, neoliberalism began to operate through the Brazilian State. The reform was directed through the defense that this would be the most appropriate way to make the State an apt, competent institution.

According to the World Bank (1997), the efficiency of the State would be equivalent to the central component for the rise of sustainable development and the confrontation of social difficulties. Furthermore, in the Report entitled "The State in a Changing World",

² In the Master Plan for the Reform of the State Apparatus, it is verified that such reform concerns the "[...] public administration in a broad sense, that is, the organizational structure of the State, in its three branches (Executive, Legislative and Judiciary) and three levels (Union, Member States and Municipalities). The State apparatus is constituted by the government, that is, by the leading leadership in the three branches, by a body of officials, and by the military force" (Brasil, 1995, p. 12).

published in 1997, the World Bank, in assigning a focus to the performance of international agencies regarding state reforms in peripheral countries, demarcated that "[...] external support can accomplish little when the internal willingness to reform is lacking" (World Bank, 1997, p. 16). In turn, in Brazil, this "internal willingness to reform" had not been scarce for the elected officials from the 1990s onwards. In the document "Brazil: a project of national reconstruction", released in 1991, the general guidelines for the admission of neoliberal ideas in the country were already established during the government of Fernando Collor de Mello (1990-1992).

However, state neoliberalization is carried out in the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) (1995-2003) and is continued by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010), Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016), Michel Temer (2016-2018) and Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019-2022). In the sense of Boito Júnior (2003), neoliberalism was established in Brazil along the lines of the Third Way. At this point in the text, it is important to present the following information: Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira, Minister of Federal Administration and State Reform, covering the period from 1995 to 1998, carried out an internship in England and, later, returned prepared to apply the principles of the Third Way in the process of reform of the Brazilian State. This form of neoliberalism, supported by the proposal of "humanized capitalism", was intensified, to a certain extent, by the governments of Lula and Dilma, characterizing itself as a kind of "third way of the periphery". However, the following of neoliberal ideas in these governments does not mean homogenizing them. Although they share neoliberal principles, there are substantial distinctions between them.

It focuses on the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC). In it, it is possible to point out that the biggest challenge was to stabilize the economy and reduce the increase in the national debt. To achieve this goal, the reform and privatization of state-owned enterprises (particularly state-owned enterprises in the telecommunications and mining sectors) have been carried out. During this period, government actions were condensed in the approval of the Financial Responsibility Law (LRF), in addition to the main surplus policy to support the payment of the debt, which grew sharply when FHC was in evidence. It is prudent, in this context, to point out that the government in question has come to be characterized by the applicability of a more arduous neoliberal policy. As Fávaro (2014, p. 375) points out, of a policy in which "[...] the business community acted intensely in civil society, expanding into the field that was previously exclusive to public policies". In the educational field, for example, the FHC government's focus was directed to

Elementary Education policies, namely the Fund for the Maintenance of the Development of Elementary Education and the Valorization of Teaching (FUNDEF), TV Escola, and the National Curriculum Parameters (PCNs).

From the above, it can be inferred that the reform of the State apparatus and the legitimization of neoliberalism in Brazil were interceded by a set of social actors (sometimes national, sometimes international). For Robertson (2012, p. 291), despite being "[...] It is tempting to think of neoliberalism as a top-down global regulatory architecture [...], like all political projects, neoliberalism requires continuous work through socially situated actors." From this, it is determined that the main guiding document for the reform of the State apparatus in Brazil was the Master Plan for the Reform of the State Apparatus, released in 1995. As postulated in the document, which is essentially motivated by the recommendations of the World Bank, the lack of fiscal control that occurred in Brazil during the 1980s was designated by the "[...] reduction in economic growth rates, increased unemployment and high inflation rates" (Brasil, 1995, p. 10), all of which originated from the fruitless action of the developmental State.

The solution to this hypothetical lack of fiscal control would consist of carrying out reforms in state institutions to replace the bureaucratic management model of developing countries with a management model based on business logic. The adoption of this model would increase the efficiency of public administration, as it would allow the State to provide high-quality public services to "citizen clients" at low cost (Brasil, 1995). The argument for the institutionalization of the reforms is based on the premise that this would be the way to modernize the country and integrate Brazil, as analyzed by Melo and Falleiros (2005), into the era of globalization.

Thus, as a product of the agreement to the managerial administration model, "[...] the State abandons the role of executor or direct provider of services [...]", remaining, however, "[...] in the role of regulator and provider or promoter of these, especially of services such as education and health, which are essential for development [...]" (Brasil, 1995, p. 13). Thus, in the direction of an orthodox neoliberal conception, the State should restrict itself to providing the basic conditions for social cohesion in the form of targeted public policies, as these constitute the most effective form of social investment.

Regarding the subject, Hayek (1990, p. 124) explains that the "[...] Thoughtless treatment of these [social] issues could create serious and even dangerous political problems." In the scholar's ideology, "[...] there is no doubt that, about food, clothing and

housing, it is possible to guarantee everyone a minimum sufficient to maintain health and work capacity" (Hayek, 1990, p. 124). The distancing of the State with regard to the direct provision of social policies and the establishment of the minimal State do not ratify the understanding that neoliberalism has led to the withdrawal of the State from the economic field. What is intended to be stated is that the neoliberal logic has led to changes in the form of State intervention in society.

To collaborate with these postulates, Santos (2011, p. 38) points out that "[...] the withdrawal of the State [in the field of social policies] can only be obtained through strong state intervention. The State has to intervene to stop intervening, that is, it has to regulate its deregulation". Putting it another way, the author suggests that "[...] deregulation implies intense regulatory activity by the State to put an end to previous state regulation and create the norms and institutions that will preside over the new model of social regulation" (Santos, 2011, p. 41-42). At the heart of this theorizing, Mascaro (2013, p. 118, emphasis added) clarifies that "[...] neoliberalism is not a withdrawal of the state from the economy, but a specific mode of *presence* of the state in the economy." Next, he also states that it is not the "[...] removal of the State from the economic, political, social and cultural scenario of hegemony, but, rather, it is a massive presence of the State political form, varying in this case the means and horizons of its action" (Mascaro, 2013, p. 124).

By taking into account the mechanisms designed for the distancing of the State from the direct rise of social services, the following table aims to summarize them. See:

Chart 1 – Mechanisms that corroborate the State's distancing from social activities

I) Privatization: It is understood as the transfer of the domain of public goods to the private sphere.
II) Publicization: concerns the process of decentralization to the non-state public sectors of actions for the development of services that do not encompass the exercise of State power, but "[...] must be subsidized by the State, as is the case with education, health, culture and scientific research services" (Brasil, 1995, p. 18).
III) Encouragement of the Third Sector or active civil society: they are represented, especially, by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which promote social services based on voluntary actions.

Source: Adapted from the Master Plan for the Reform of the State Apparatus (Brasil, 1995).

To expand the Third Sector and active civil society in the New Public Management, Barroso (2013, p. 14) states that "[...] greater attention and visibility is given, in political rhetoric, to the 'local', which is now seen, above all, as a place of innovation and mobilization". These are, therefore, how the State determines its new parameter of social intervention. For Montañó and Duriguetto (2011), the measures outlined by the reform

required substantial changes specifically aimed at the liberation of markets, the privatization of industries and services, the flexibilization and deregulation of the labor market, and the growth of the Third Sector.

According to the guidelines of the Master Plan for the Reform of the State Apparatus, it should only continue to be the responsibility of the State: "[...] basic social security, the unemployment service, the inspection of compliance with health standards", as well as "the traffic service, the purchase of health services by the State, the control of the environment, the subsidy to basic education, the service of issuing passports, etc." (Brasil, 1995, p. 41). If the discussion is directed to the field of Brazilian educational policies, it can be seen that international organizations are in charge of the task of regulators, since they prepare policy documents of global repercussion, and regulators, since they control the process of application of the guidelines present in the documents.

Consequently, it is understood that the reform of the State apparatus and the institutionalization of the neoliberal logic in Brazil led to the improvement of the capacity of this State to mediate the interests of imperialist international capital amid the reduction of the relative autonomy of the Brazilian State in the planning and regulation of national policies. Also, in order to synthesize the information theorized so far, the following table is considered.

Chart 2 – Summaries of information about the process of reform of the State apparatus and the implementation of neoliberal principles in the phase of relative autonomy of the Brazilian State

Summary 1	Decentralization of social actions from the State to civil society (private sectors and the population as a whole).
Summary 2	Centralization of political deliberations in the State.
Summary 3	Expansion of the private sectors and structuring of "active civil society".
Summary 4	Fragmentary delegation of the power of political choice of the national state to the "instances of supranational regulation".
Summary 5	Reduction of the relative autonomy of the Brazilian national state and improvement of its mediating role about the dispositions of imperialist international capital.

Source: Balieiro (2022, p. 57).

Based on the postulates of the reform of the State apparatus in Brazil, we reflect that the mediation role of the Brazilian State has been improved by the interests of international capital. Increasingly, the supervision of Brazilian public policies is outsourced to international institutions. The transfer of regulatory power is a bargaining chip for Brazil's integration into global politics. Notoriously, this fact led to a reduction in the relative

autonomy of the country and an improvement in its mediating nature in terms of the interests of international capital.

Based on the information exposed, it is considered that the neoliberal State does not envision education as a public good, as is perceptible, even in the Incheon Declaration (UN, 2015); education, from the perspective of the neoliberal State, is defined as another source of social spending that should, whenever possible, be polished. The idea that education is a public good is shared, using the theorizations of Hirschman (1973) and Azevedo (2019). In the conception of the first author, public goods "[...] are defined as goods consumed by all members of a given community, country, or geographical area, without their consumption or use by one member preventing consumption or use by another" (Hirschman, 1973, p. 102). For Azevedo (2019, p. 874):

[...] The need to clarify what is a public good lies in the fact that the capitalist system is a system based on the production and exchange of commodities, but there are goods that, with a view to the common good, cannot become commodities. Thus, the definition of public good is a way of signaling that, even in the capitalist system, some goods are produced, protected and made available through the public sphere of the State and cannot (or should not) be the object of commodification, outsourcing or concession in Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

For this reason, public goods and common goods, such as education and knowledge, when inappropriately considered commodities or personal goods, are subject to market laws, in order to illustrate modes of privatization, commodification, expropriation, and "*enclosure*" (Azevedo, 2019). In the next section, we enter into the discussion about neoliberal rationality, in order to understand its specificities.

NEOLIBERAL RATIONALITY: A GOVERNANCE OF SUBJECTIVITIES

"Neoliberalism employs unprecedented techniques of power over conduct and subjectivities. It cannot be reduced to the spontaneous expansion of the mercantile sphere and the field of capital accumulation" (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 19). As Dardot and Laval (2016) elucidate, neoliberalism cannot be thought³ of only as a doctrine that aims at the accumulation of capital. The discussion goes beyond that. When it proposes to reflect on

³ Harvey (2008, p. 12) also states that neoliberalism "[...] It is first and foremost a theory of political-economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be promoted by freeing individual freedoms and entrepreneurial capacities within an institutional framework characterized by solid private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the State is to create and preserve an institutional structure appropriate to these practices; the State has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money".

neoliberal rationality, it is believed that it is necessary to refer to subjectivities (as demarcated in the title of this section, in a 'governance' of subjectivities). In the sense of the aforementioned authors, utilitarianism is constituted as the source of the rational economic subject, but it is not the literal way of 'packaging' it. Without abandoning the foundation of utilitarianism, nineteenth-century liberalism was transmuted into twentieth-century neoliberalism. Like an ingenious calculator, the optimizer is still the rational building block for allocating limited resources among alternatives. Presumably, this proposition is condensed in the activities of economists.

Although the economic subject remains the basis of the dominant discourse, in the second half of the twentieth century, a new rational subject appeared, and the economic subject became a company of human capital. Like industrial capital, it needs to be constantly valued. One can define this as a new history that re-evaluates real capitalist competition, as neoclassical theory suppressed it through the concept of perfect competition. There is no longer a steady-state machine that tends to balance itself like the market itself. Today, there is an entrepreneurial subject to create an imbalance, breaking conventions, producing innovation, always remaining with the ability to adapt to the sustainable flow of capital (Dardot; Laval, 2016).

Thus, it is pertinent to infer that the new economic subject sees itself subjectively as a company. This new history detached itself from total rationality and considered a rationality limited by the impossibility of acquiring full information regarding the conditions under which economic practice should be carried out. Such a subject is still a person who seeks, in an unsurpassed way, more utility, expenditure, fortune and more capital. Considering that the logic of capital confers on causing more damage to the natural and social world, consumerism and the logic of more consumption annihilate even living beings themselves.

Therefore, the discussion leads us to reflect that consumers are products of government imposed by advertising and marketing; in this context, the corporate media has worked too hard to call for 'freedom' and 'democracy', always propagating these elements continuously. With this, true freedom and democracy are ended, since a certain autonomy of the subjects is considered – and the constitution of a desire formed by their interactions.

Regarding the above, it can be seen that "neoliberalism would thus be equivalent to the ruthless commodification of the whole of society" (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 21). In reality, as theorists expound, this is what

[...] Duménil and Lévy argue when they write: "*Finally neoliberalism is indeed the bearer of a process of general commodification of social relationships*" (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 21, emphasis added).

Thus, it is valid to reflect that neoliberalism is engendered as a political rationality, whose role is to expand the logic of value as much as possible. This also means that its unlimited logic has spread to all areas of social life, making relations, commodified. At the heart of this issue, Carvalho (2020, p. 110) clarifies:

Neoliberalism can even be understood as a response to current economic, political and social problems and even as a hegemonic response, but it is not the only or the most appropriate response. Human relations are contradictory and, for this very reason, marked by conflicts and social oppositions, and can produce alternatives to the challenges of today's society, especially in the sense of overcoming the limitations generated by individualism and competition.

In view of these postulates, it can be seen that the development of sociability is marked by contradictions and moments of structural instability. In this context, capitalism responds to these moments, that is, it finds a new cycle of instabilities that allows reproduction in the social, political, and economic fields. Cyclical crises have marked our society, challenging it to search for recomposition mechanisms to continue reproduction. From this, it is reflected that crises are always of overproduction. As can be seen, the tendency of capital is competition, the recurrence of new markets, new commodities, to make them more attractive to consumers; Amid this process, there are contradictions. There are even contradictions and conflicts in the political sphere, but they permeate, above all, society, especially if we think about the application of business management within public management.

In the conception of Dardot and Laval (2016), the neoliberal system disintegrated the democratic movement as never before, which led us to what is called the "post-democratic era", as the authors reflect. One of the most emphatic indications of this action corresponds to a change in the concept of public good and its precepts of distribution. The rights related to citizenship and those enshrined in history as a logical fruit of political democracy have been questioned by a consumerist meaning of public service of an

individual who has no obligation to society. With this in mind, the reflection is directed to the effective practices of neoliberalism, with the following postulate by Harvey (2011, p. 177):

The effective practices of neoliberalism [...] have always implied clear support for finance capital and capitalist elites (usually based on the theory that financial institutions must be protected at all costs and that state power must create a pleasant environment for business, which would result in more profit). Fundamentally, nothing has changed. Such practices are justified by the appeal to the dubious proposition that a "rising tide" of capitalist enterprise would "lift all boats," i.e., that the benefits of compound growth would magically bring benefits to the entire population.

This quote from Harvey (2011) allows us to think about our circumscribed functions in society. Our relationships are permeated by contradictions, as Carvalho (2020) points out. They are not linear. These are relationships marked by inequalities, an exclusion. When we are faced with information that benefits would be granted to the population, we are aware that this is not exactly how it occurs. It is necessary to consider that inequality stems from some who own the property, and others who do not. This produces social differentiations. Distribution does not occur equally to society, manifesting itself, evidently, in other fields.

In this way, it can be assumed, based on Dardot and Laval (2016), that "the new reason of the world" introduces an unprecedented subjective form and constitutes a political and ideological challenge. A reason that points to our forms of sociability, hegemonic thoughts and operationalized actions. In this sense, the debate on neoliberalism and its impasses needs to be analyzed with intelligibility, without ceasing to be mistaken when the discourse falls into the notion that the subject can be free, an entrepreneur of himself. As attested by the scholars in question, the neoliberal strategy

[...] It will then consist in creating as many market situations as possible, i.e., organizing by various means (privatization, creation of competition in public services, "commodification" of schools and hospitals, solvency by private debt) the "obligation to choose" so that individuals accept the market situation as it is imposed on them as "reality," i.e., as the only "rule of the game", and thus incorporate the need to carry out a calculation of individual interest if they do not want to lose "in the game" and, even more, if they want to value their capital in a universe in which accumulation seems to be the general law of life (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 212).

Thus, it is reaffirmed that capitalism seeks forms of reproduction. In capitalist society, all people and things have been made commodities; In the market, we exchange – it is a relationship of exchanges. About the laws of the market, regardless of who owns the

capital, it is perceived that, when the other buys our labor power, it is controlled to pass through the hands of the State – this as a political, juridical sphere, which ensures the rights of free, equal subjects to contract. When exchanges become generalized, we see the political sphere that legally guarantees the rights of the subjects. Politics is identified with individual individuals, and it is as if the State were the guardian of these rights. Ultimately, the fulfillment of bonds and the defense of private property are ensured, thus contributing to the reproduction of social forms.

For this reason, as advocated by Dardot and Laval (2016), knowledge of and criticism of neoliberalism are fundamental, since only the understanding of this rationality can make real resistance oppose and raise another reason in the world. As already mentioned, neoliberalism fosters a process of commodification of social relations. Then, the discussion focuses on the educational field, considering, in a more punctual way, this process, based on the performance of the business community and its consequences.

[...]. **Entrepreneurs are motivated by the pursuit of profit**; Government officials are guided by the desire to be re-elected. Companies receive most of their resources from customers; Governments are funded by taxpayers. Companies usually work on a competitive basis; governments habitually use the monopoly system (Osborne; Goebler, 1998, p. 21, emphasis added).

Osborne and Goebler (1998) highlight a fundamental aspect in relation to the issue of entrepreneurship: the search for profit. Competition is present amid this demand, in order to encourage subjects to survive in the labor market governed by the logic of capital. If we focus on education, we are faced with a very worrying situation:

Education is a service like any other, someone offers and someone acquires, someone invests and someone pays for it. Education is not a right in the sense that society should provide to the individual. The right to education means that anyone who can afford to acquire knowledge cannot be hindered. Education is like a hamburger, whoever wants to satisfy their hunger enters the establishment of their choice and pays according to the price they are selling [...] (Rachewsky, 2019 *apud* Peroni; Lima, 2020, p. 10).

How can education be compared to a hamburger? Is it some kind of service, which is offered to someone like a product available on the shelf of a market? It is questions of this nature that allow us to observe how much the humanitarian character of education is increasingly attenuated. Regarding the institutionalization of neoliberalism, Peroni and Lima (2020, p. 5) state that

[...] it has a political dimension that involves the conception of the corporate state and corporate governance; an economic dimension that involves financialization, unwagedness and pension reforms; a cultural dimension that proposes corporate citizenship, depoliticization and de-solidarity. The main focus of this institutionalization process is entrepreneurship. It is important to highlight that it is not just about the entrepreneurial State, it is a business State: it will not be an entrepreneur of the small entrepreneur, it will be the business State in the sense of the market.

Thus, it is reiterated that the changes in the role of the State are profound, since it no longer becomes the executor of policies, but the controller of results, promoting the company's ideology and transferring individual responsibilities to the subjects (Peroni; Lima, 2020). When cooperating with the discussion on individualism, Carvalho (2020, p. 31) ponders that "[...] civil society would be a field of struggle for private interests and a space of natural inequalities and individualism, one of the foundations of modern society". If individualism constitutes the core of a modern, globalized society, the notion of education as a public good, equivalent to the common good, it is replaced by the conception of education as a commodity or, in more literal terms, as a commodification, meaning that products follow a form of market competition. Regarding the commodification of public education, Peroni, Caetano and Lima (2017, p. 417) state that

[...] it is also not an abstraction; it occurs via subjects and processes. Individual and collective subjects [...] who are increasingly organized, in networks from the local to the global, with different degrees of influence and who speak from different places: the financial sector, international organizations, the government sector. Some institutions are for-profit and others are not (or not clearly), but the networks are subjects (individual and collective) in relation, with a class project [...].

With these postulates in evidence, Balieiro, Ferreira, and Azevedo (2023) state that large Brazilian economic groups, banks and contractors pointed out the strategic importance of instructing the direction of education in Brazil. Peroni and Lima (2020, p. 3) have already warned us: "[...] The private sector acts with the endorsement of the public, which has the same political class perspective and, therefore, hires it. This is what we have treated as privatization as a public policy." That is: the business community practices this action precisely as a class policy, as a class with structural objectives, projects and expressive training concepts to transform subjects into human capital.

What, therefore, are the new directions for education, given an essentially neoliberal, globalized and, increasingly, platformized context? With class projects in place, using the idea that Brazilian public education, to achieve satisfactory results, needs to ally

itself with the private sector and, thus, avidly reinforce practices of competitiveness, employability and entrepreneurship, education works according to the logic of an "educating capital" (Evangelista, 2021). As Mészáros (2005) emphasizes, social transformation, to overcome the order of capital, requires a vital conception in the field of education, that is, an education that goes "beyond capital".

CONCLUSION

[...] the neoliberal strategy consisted and still consists of systematically guiding the conduct of individuals as if they were always and everywhere committed to relations of transaction and competition in the market (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 235).

When it is pointed out that neoliberal rationality is equivalent to a governance of subjectivities, the intention is precisely to demarcate that there is a systematic orientation of values, conducts and behaviors of subjects that operate according to the logic of capital. It is necessary to consider that the very notion of governance permeates the aspect of managing a conflict, which comes strongly with the notion of the entrepreneurial State (Osborne; Goebler, 1998). In other words, the idea of the entrepreneurial government is linked to the idea of the citizen-client (no longer a citizen with rights). This makes the notion of individuality clear. Thus, the citizen-client seeks the following commodity/product in the market: education.

It is with the intensification of capitalism in the modern era that we will have the emergence of a political form separated from individuals and classes. It is a form built from the new economic relations that have been solidifying in response to the needs of survival. Thus, focusing on the educational field, it is reflected that neoliberalism leads education to a commodification (Peroni; Caetano; Lima, 2017), in which producers follow a form of market competition. Therefore, it is necessary to

[...] always remember that we are in a sociometabolic system of capital [...], hence the importance of showing, as researchers, how capitalism moves strategically in such platformized times. Furthermore, it is stated that a proposal for individualization is, of course, the materialization of neoliberalism in opposition to the collective. This materialization is not only effective in the rulers but also in the governed – in this case, the fact that neoliberalism significantly alters subjectivities (Balieiro; Ferreira; Azevedo, 2023, p. 15).

Based on all the above, the objective of this article was to reflect on the implications of neoliberal rationality in Brazilian society. That is why it was essential to go through the

specificities that constitute the reform of the State apparatus in Brazil and the legitimization of neoliberalism, to later enter into the neoliberal rationality understood as a governance of subjectivities, which is perceptible with the performance of the business community in the educational field. The idea of "educating capital" postulated by Evangelista (2021), based on the theorizations of Peroni, Caetano and Lima (2017), guides us to think that there are privatization policy projects (whether directly or indirectly) supported by the ideals of quality, the promotion of public-private partnerships and the propagation of a hegemony based on a transformative discourse, modern, autonomous and utilitarian.

Furthermore, based on the idea emphasized by Carvalho (2020) that human relations are contradictory, it is pertinent to demarcate that the neoliberal discourse is covered with complexities. For this reason, it is important to think about it beyond the principles of the Washington Consensus⁴, for example. It is a process marked by different strategies, with several faces. On this subject, the following passage from Bourdieu (1998, p. 136-137, emphasis mine) is important:

Effectively, **the neoliberal discourse is not a discourse like the others**. [...] it is a "strong discourse", which is only so strong and so difficult to combat because it has in its favor all the forces of a world of power relations, which it helps to make as it is, above all by guiding the economic choices of those who dominate economic relations and thus adding its strength, properly symbolic, to these relations of force.

Bourdieu (1998) highlights the contradiction of the logic founded on competition and submitted to the rule of competitiveness. Thus, all productive structures capable of resisting the logic of the market are put at risk, encouraging the use of individual contracts. In view of the sociologist's postulates, it is inferred that competition and competence have become the new reason of the world, of the State, of institutions, and of the market. The State itself submits to the norm of competition, to the norms of the market, which directly affect individuals with their relations with themselves (subjects-company/subjects-client: this is the new characterization, through an entrepreneurial State). The company is driven by a model of subjectivation, based on a capital that must become productive.

⁴ "Washington's approach to the Latin American crisis has been defined and solidified through the 1980s. [...] Williamson (1990), a prominent economist at the Institute for International Economics, wrote an article that served as the basis for an international seminar and the publication of a book, in which he defined what he called the "Washington consensus". [...] the fact is that there is, in Washington and more broadly in the developed countries of the OECD, a kind of consensus on the nature of the Latin American crisis and on the reforms that are necessary to overcome it" (Bresser-Pereira, 1991, p. 5).

The State organizes the market, becoming the center of the development of capital. It follows that State and capital are linked to each other both institutionally and personally. The first is a space of contradiction, in which private, private/mercantile, and public interests are associated. It must be considered a material condensation of the correlation of forces in which setbacks, clashes, and disputes are expressed, covering a struggle and class fractions in a specific era. The second, in turn, advances under new molds to continue its reproduction.

Education, finally, resignifies itself in times of advanced capitalism under neoliberal rationality. Its directions lead to a process of commodification, distancing itself from a humanitarian practice and an effective social right. As Dardot and Laval (2016, p. 387) very well illustrate, we are aware

[...] that it is easier to escape from a prison than to leave a rationality, because this means getting rid of a system of norms established through a whole work of interiorization. This is particularly true of neoliberal rationality, insofar as it tends to lock the subject in the small "steel cage" that he has built for himself. Thus, the question is, first and foremost, how to prepare the way for this exit, that is, how to resist the dominant rationality here and now.

Resistance to this rationality, therefore, requires critical awareness and political engagement, especially in the educational field, to claim education as a public good.

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