


## **BETWEEN DISCOURSE AND REALITY – THE VALORIZATION OF TEACHING WORK UNDER THE LOGIC OF THE MINIMAL STATE AND THE ORDER OF CAPITAL**

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## ABSTRACT

This research performs a critical analysis of the contradictions between the official discourse of valuing the teaching work and the concrete practices adopted by the State under the neoliberal logic. By investigating the impacts of educational reforms and austerity policies, it is evident how the valorization of teaching has been instrumentalized by a rhetoric that hides the progressive dismantling of labor rights, the intensification of control over pedagogical practice and the precariousness of working conditions. That said, the question that guides this research is the following: In what way is the official discourse of valuing the teaching work used to legitimize policies of dismantling, controlling, and precariousness of teaching in the context of the neoliberal State? For this, we used as theoretical repertoire the works of Gramsci (1999; 2000; 2001), Althusser (1970), Saviani (1980; 2008; 2013), Nóvoa (1995), Frigotto (1995), Laval (2003; 2014; 2019), Apple (2006; 2019), Ball (1994; 2005; 2008), Feldfeber and Oliveira (2008), Antunes (2009), Biesta (2010; 2013), Martins and Duarte (2010), Robertson et. al. (2012), Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), Giroux (2014; 2014), as well as the norms: LDB, PNE, BNCC and FUNDEB. The research is qualitative (Minayo, 2007), descriptive and bibliographic (Gil, 2008) and with comprehensive analysis (Weber, 1949). The results showed that the discourse of teacher valorization has been appropriated by the neoliberal State as an instrument to legitimize reforms that deepen the control, precariousness and individual accountability of teachers. The mismatch between the official rhetoric and the concrete working conditions was verified, revealing a process of emptying pedagogical autonomy. The educational policies analyzed operate under a technocratic logic that dehumanizes the teaching practice and weakens the public school as a space for social emancipation.

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## INTRODUCTION

### BETWEEN RHETORIC AND REALITY: TEACHER VALORIZATION AS A DISPOSITION IDEOLOGICAL IN THE CONTEXT OF NEOLIBERALISM

When we analyze historically the valorization of teachers in Brazilian public policies, it is possible to observe that, although teaching has been recognized as an essential function for the development of society, its effective valorization has always been tensioned by economic and structural interests. As Saviani (2008, p. 47) points out, "[...] the school was kept in a state of structural precariousness, partly as a strategy to contain public spending". Likewise, Frigotto (1995, p. 19) emphasizes that "[...] the work of the teacher, even though it is proclaimed as essential, is subjected to labor relations that devalue and make it precarious".

The materiality in which we find ourselves – of imperialism, of Brazil's subordinate insertion in international relations, of the imposition of financialized economic logic, of new forms of organization of bourgeois interests [...] shows that in the structural sphere, new, unthinkable forms of expropriation of the worker are being implemented. The school, in turn, is impacted by this cruel movement, one of the reasons that led it to become an important market niche. It is about ensuring the reproduction of capital that, in conjunctures of crisis, 'seeks new forms of valorization, including through educational work' (Evangelista et. al., 2019, p. 177).

However, in recent decades, the discourse of valuing the teacher has gained centrality in the official texts of educational reforms, appearing as a watchword associated with the quality of teaching. However, this centrality did not necessarily translate into substantive transformations. As Feldfeber and Oliveira (2008, p. 32) point out, "[...] recent educational reforms appeal to a language of valorization as a strategy of political legitimation". Similarly, Evangelista et. al. (2019, p. 65) observe that "[...] the valorization of teachers is appropriated discursively by reforming agents, but emptied of its historical and social content".

That is why a central contradiction emerges: the distance between the official discourse of valorization and the material reality of the teaching work. Although the normative documents evoke a commitment to teachers, practice reveals another face. As highlighted by Diniz et. al. (2019, p. 23): "[...] teachers continue to face low salaries, exhausting working hours and scarce conditions for teaching". Similarly, Ball (2005, p. 143) states that "[...] the rhetoric of valorization hides the intensification of work and the individualization of responsibilities".

This is the current drama of the teacher. In fact, he is also a victim of exclusionary inclusion. In the spirit of the neo-productivist conception, the leaders expect the teacher to perform a whole set of functions with the maximum productivity and the minimum expenditure, that is, with modest salaries. Of course, if the teacher were well paid within the scope of a teaching career that guaranteed him full-time work in a single school, he could dedicate himself to school and teaching with a different disposition. But what we see is their sacrifice, their dispersion, their individual accountability in the face of problems that are structural and systemic (Saviani, 2013, p. 450).

Given how this contradiction occurs within a broader political project, it is essential to address the logic of the neoliberal minimal State<sup>17</sup>, which repositions the role of the State and imposes a business rationality on the public sector. As Dardot and Laval (2014, p. 156) clarify: "[...] the neoliberal logic transforms the State into a manager of competitiveness, reducing its social function and transferring responsibilities to individuals". According to Harvey (2007, p. 65), "[...] neoliberalism promotes deregulation, privatization and austerity as central axes of its action."

As soon as education is inserted in this market logic, there is a growing instrumentalization of the teaching work. Teaching is now regulated by goals, performance and productivity evaluations, displacing the centrality of the pedagogical process. As Apple (2006, p. 89) warns: "[...] the teacher is pressured to adapt to a performative pedagogy, detached from his critical autonomy". Likewise, Biesta (2010, p. 27) argues that "[...] the logic of measurement transforms teaching into a technical exercise, emptying the ethical and political meaning of education".

Despite calls for participatory management, the growth of Taylorism<sup>18</sup> draws attention. For example, by importing the references of continuing education, the

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<sup>17</sup> The logic of the neoliberal minimal State has profoundly reconfigured the role of the State in education, transforming it from a promoter of social rights into a manager of competitiveness. From this perspective, public education is restructured according to business principles, in which efficiency, productivity and performance replace values such as integral education, equity and emancipation. In this scenario, the State is not obliged to guarantee structural conditions for teaching, transferring the responsibility for school success or failure to the teachers themselves. As Dardot and Laval (2014, p. 156) state, "[...] the neoliberal logic transforms the State into a manager of competitiveness, reducing its social function and transferring responsibilities to individuals". Such a reorganization weakens the public character of the school and legitimizes the precariousness of the teaching work, while at the same time dissimulating exclusion through meritocratic discourses and accountability techniques. See: DARDOT, Pierre; LAVAL, Christian. *The new reason of the world: an essay on neoliberal society*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> The growth of Taylorism in education has contributed to the intensification and standardization of the teaching work, imposing on teachers a logic of meticulous control of tasks, rigid organization of time and precise definition of the objectives to be achieved. Inspired by the principles of scientific management, this model transforms the educational act into a technical, fragmented and dehumanized process, where the teacher's protagonism is replaced by obedience to curricular and methodological prescriptions. As Laval and Dardot (2014, p. 123) warn, "[...] the behaviors that are expected of teachers were defined more clearly, the tasks and

holders of pedagogical power have increasingly advanced towards the standardization of times and fundamental professional actions. The behaviors that are expected of teachers were defined more clearly, the tasks and objectives were formalized so that there was greater predictability of the results and a stricter control of the work performed. [...] Teachers have been 'invited' to put into practice calibrated 'innovations' and are increasingly evaluated by the degree of respect for innovative instructions. With subordination, the guaranteed result of the movement is infantilization (Laval, 2019, p. 123).

Since education is submitted to the rationality of capital, it is imperative to understand how the rhetoric of teacher valorization is mobilized to justify reforms that, in practice, deepen the precariousness of work. This is, therefore, the problem that guides this reflection: how is the discourse of valorization captured to legitimize processes of intensification, accountability and deprofessionalization of teachers? As Ball (1994, p. 65) points out, "[...] The discourse of educational reform is a field of dispute where distinct interests operate under the cloak of technical neutrality." Likewise, Giroux (2014, p. 39) emphasizes that "[...] the language of valorization is often instrumentalized to mask the structural violence of neoliberalism."

In order to face this scenario, this work aims to critically analyze the meanings attributed to the valorization of teachers in times of neoliberalism and fiscal austerity, seeking to unveil the ideological uses of this concept. As indicated by Cêa, Rummert and Gonçalves (2019, p. 14), "[...] it is necessary to reconnect the struggle for valorization to the broader struggle for the emancipation of teaching work". According to Antunes (2009, p. 83), "[...] there is no real valorization without overcoming the capitalist logic of control and intensification of work."

The valorization of teaching, however, also demands other adjectives. To which teaching, then, are we referring? To that which can represent increases in value in the direction of 'human emancipation from the conditions of exploitation in which the vast majority of individuals live, in which teachers themselves are often included'. Thus, we do not consider uncertain and doubtful strategies by which teachers can be trained as synonymous with evaluative intention, such as the Distance Learning (DE) modality, announced as a 'possibility' in the Document in question (Martins, 2009, p. 470).

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objectives were formalized so that there was greater predictability of the results and a stricter control of the work performed". Thus, pedagogy becomes subordinated to a productivist rationality, which compromises the autonomy and critical sense of educational practice. See: DARDOT, Pierre; LAVAL, Christian. *The new reason of the world: an essay on neoliberal society*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2014.



Although legal frameworks such as the National Education Plan (PNE)<sup>19</sup> and the LDB<sup>20</sup> include guidelines for valorization, their formulations are often exhausted in the enunciation of principles, without effective guarantees. According to the PNE (2014, p. 9), "[...] valuing education professionals is one of the foundations for improving the quality of teaching". However, as the LDB document (1996, p. 27) observes, "[...] the effectiveness of these guidelines depends on regulation and implementation by the federated entities".

As evaluation and control mechanisms intensify, teachers are placed under constant surveillance, which profoundly affects their autonomy and professional identity. As Biesta (2013, p. 51) points out, "[...] excessive regulation transforms education into an activity guided by external results, breaking with its formative dimension". Giroux (2014, p. 97) also points out that "[...] education is captured by a logic of performance that stifles critical thinking and teacher creativity".

Face-to-face training modalities were replaced by distance education, in addition to the technological paraphernalia quoted as 'help' to the teacher in order to leave him 'free' from the work of planning and selecting knowledge, revealing itself to be the hard face of 'autonomy'. It is, in fact, a meticulous control of the teaching practice that aims to remove from the social being what should characterize it, intending to transform it into an everlasting, alienated source of profit for the entrepreneurs involved. A path very well designed by the organic intellectuals of the bourgeoisie, whose contents, in trying to shape teaching, wanted to deform it (Evangelista et. al., 2019, p. 52).

<sup>19</sup> The National Education Plan (PNE), established by Law No. 13,005/2014, establishes guidelines, goals, and strategies for Brazilian educational policy in the period from 2014 to 2024, having as one of its central foundations the valorization of education professionals. However, despite enunciating the commitment to the improvement of working conditions and teacher training, the PNE is often limited to the formulation of generic principles, without effective implementation and monitoring mechanisms that ensure the materialization of these goals. In its wording, the plan states that "[...] the valorization of education professionals constitutes one of the foundations for improving the quality of education" (BRASIL, 2014, p. 9), but leaves open the concrete responsibility of the federative entities regarding the effectiveness of this valorization. Thus, the PNE reveals the distance between the normative discourses and the structuring practices of educational policy in the country. See: BRAZIL. *National Education Plan: Law No. 13,005, of June 25, 2014*. Brasília: Ministry of Education, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), instituted by Law No. 9,394/1996, constitutes the main legal framework of Brazilian education, establishing principles, objectives and norms for the organization of national education at all levels and modalities. Among its provisions, the LDB highlights the appreciation of school education professionals as one of the pillars for the quality of teaching, providing for the guarantee of a professional salary floor, admission through public competition and continuing education. However, the implementation of these provisions still encounters numerous obstacles, especially with regard to the inequality of conditions between the education systems and the absence of structuring policies. As the legal text itself points out, "[...] the valorization of school education professionals should consider continuing education, the professional salary floor, career progression, among other aspects" (BRASIL, 1996, p. 27). Still, many of these guidelines remain normative promises without full practical realization. See: BRAZIL. *Law No. 9,394, of December 20, 1996: Establishes the guidelines and bases of national education*. Brasília: Presidency of the Republic, 1996.

Despite this, the rhetoric of valorization remains a powerful discursive tool, appropriated by multilateral organizations<sup>21</sup>, governments, and private sectors to sustain reforms based on meritocracy, competitiveness, and accountability. As stated by Ball (2008, p. 149), "[...] appreciation is reconfigured as the ability to adapt to the market and to the culture of excellence". Likewise, Shiroma, Moraes and Evangelista (2011, p. 58) point out that "[...] teachers are called upon to incorporate business values as a condition for their professional legitimacy".

As these analyses demonstrate, there is a structural dissonance between the discourse of appreciation and the experience lived by teachers. Despite the calls for appreciation, the school daily life remains marked by multiple forms of exploitation. According to Martins and Duarte (2010, p. 113), "[...] valorization is only achieved when linked to policies that recognize the teaching work as a transformative praxis". Edileuza da Silva (2020, p. 75) argues that "[...] It is necessary to overcome the model that treats teacher training and recognition as a commodity regulated by performance indicators".

Throughout the 1980s, counter-hegemonic pedagogies tried to come to the aid of the teacher, transforming the tenuous flame of hope into a beacon to point the way to an effectively critical and transformative education. But these trials were not strong enough to impose themselves on the structure of domination that characterizes Brazilian society. [...] He is still asked to be efficient and productive, but now he does not need to follow a rigid plan; it does not need to guide its action by predefined objectives, following pre-established rules. [...] Teachers are also urged to continuously improve themselves in an eternal process of learning to learn (Saviani, 2013, p. 449).

Thus, this study proposes a critical reading of the discourses on valorization, articulating them with the transformations of the teaching work in the context of the crisis of capital. As Dardot and Laval (2014, p. 287) conclude, "[...] resistance to neoliberal reason requires reconfiguring the meanings of education and teaching beyond the demands of the market." Therefore, resuming valorization in its full sense implies recognizing the teacher

<sup>21</sup> The rhetoric of valuing teachers has been widely appropriated by multilateral organizations, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, which influence the formulation of educational policies in peripheral countries based on a logic of performance, competitiveness and individual accountability. These bodies promote standardized evaluation models and link the valorization of professors to meritocracy and the fulfillment of goals, shifting the debate from valorization to a managerial perspective. Such influence translates into the export of reforms that prioritize control over the teaching work to the detriment of pedagogical autonomy and critical training. As analyzed by Feldfeber and Oliveira (2008, p. 32), "[...] recent educational reforms appeal to a language of valorization as a strategy of political legitimation, influenced by multilateral agendas that reduce the role of the State and promote the logic of the market in education". See: FELDFEBER, Myriam; OLIVEIRA, Dalila Andrade. *Educational policies and teaching work: new regulations, new subjects?* Buenos Aires: Noveduc, 2008.



as a historical subject, producer of knowledge and agent of social transformation, as Saviani (2013, p. 91) argues, when he states that "[...] historical-critical pedagogy requires that the valorization of the teacher be a condition for the emancipation of the student and society".

## **INTERPRETATIVE PATHS: QUALITATIVE AND COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONTRADICTIONS IN TEACHER VALUATION UNDER NEOLIBERALISM**

The present research adopted a qualitative approach because it understands that the processes of teacher valorization, under the neoliberal logic, require an interpretative and contextualized look. This is because, more than quantifying policies and discourses, it was necessary to understand the social, political and ideological meanings attributed to teaching in contemporary times. As Minayo (2007, p. 21) points out: "[...] Qualitative research works with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes", aspects that proved to be essential for the objective of this study. In addition, "[...] the level of reality that it investigates is not visible and needs to be exposed and interpreted by the subjects themselves" (Minayo, 2007, p. 22), which reinforced the adequacy of this approach to the investigated theme.

Qualitative research answers very particular questions. In the social sciences, it is concerned with a level of reality that cannot or should not be quantified. That is, it works with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes. This set of human phenomena is understood here as part of social reality, as the human being is distinguished not only by acting, but by thinking about what he does and by interpreting his actions within and from the reality lived and shared with his fellow human beings. The universe of human production that can be summarized in the world of relations, representations and intentionality [...] can hardly be translated into numbers and quantitative indicators (Minayo, 2006, p. 21).

In this sense, the option for qualitative research was anchored in the commitment to the complexity and uniqueness of educational phenomena. In seeking to interpret the relations between the official discourse of valorization and the concrete practices of the State, the research had to escape from statistical generalizations and enter the field of meanings and symbolic disputes. As Stake (2011, p. 25) summarizes, "[...] qualitative research is interpretive, experiential, situational and personalistic", offering analytical tools to understand how teachers experience the contradictions of the teaching work in concrete contexts. For him, "[...] the interpretations depend on the experience of the researcher, the people involved and the institutional context" (2011, p. 25).

The type of research was descriptive and bibliographic. Its descriptive nature is justified by the fact that it seeks to present and examine the policies and discourses that cross the teaching work, describing their forms of action, their effects on pedagogical practice and their contradictions. As Gil (2008, p. 29) clarifies: "[...] descriptive research has as its primary objective the description of the characteristics of a given population or phenomenon, or the establishment of relationships between variables". In addition, "[...] are widely used by social researchers interested in understanding the practical performance of subjects in specific contexts" (2008, p. 30).

Descriptive research is, together with exploratory research, the ones usually carried out by social researchers concerned with practical action. [...] They are also the most requested by organizations such as educational institutions, commercial companies, political parties, etc. [...] Among the descriptive researches, those that aim to study the characteristics of a group stand out: its distribution by age, sex, origin, level of education, income level, physical and mental health status, etc. Descriptive research is also those that aim to discover the existence of associations between variables, such as, for example, electoral surveys that indicate the relationship between political-party preference and income or education level (Gil, 2008, p. 29-30).

From the point of view of its sources, the research was configured as bibliographic, anchored in the analysis of theoretical works and official documents. This choice allowed the systematization of a broad analytical repertoire on teaching work, ideology and educational policies. As Gil (2008, p. 44) points out: "[...] bibliographic research uses material already prepared, consisting mainly of books and scientific articles". According to him, "[...] this type of research offers a solid theoretical support to interpret the data and phenomena investigated" (p. 45), which was fundamental for the critical articulation of the discourses of valorization and the practical effects of their application.

The bibliographic research is developed from material already prepared, consisting mainly of books and scientific articles. [...] The main advantage of literature search lies in the fact that it allows the researcher to cover a much wider range of phenomena than he could research directly. [...] Bibliographic research is also indispensable in historical studies. In many situations, there is no other way to know past facts than based on secondary data (Gil, 2008, p. 50-51).

The analytical procedure adopted was comprehensive analysis, according to the principles established by Max Weber (1949), which allow us to apprehend the intentionality of social actions. Comprehensive analysis seeks to interpret the meanings attributed by the actors to their actions and institutions, considering the historical and political context in

which they are situated. Minayo (2007, p. 90) complements this perspective by stating that "[...] interpretation consists of relating semantic structures with sociological structures of the utterances present in the message". Also according to her, "[...] comprehensive reading must be exhaustive and impregnated with the content, seeking to reach the deepest levels of meaning" (p. 91).

Official documents that structure Brazilian educational policies were selected as empirical materials: LDB (Law of Guidelines and Bases), PNE (National Education Plan), BNCC (National Common Curricular Base) and the new FUNDEB. In addition to these, theoretical productions of reference on teaching work, neoliberalism, ideology and educational policies were analyzed. This selection sought to ensure the representativeness of the documents and authors in relation to the tensions between the institutional discourse and the real conditions of the exercise of teaching. As Stake (2011, p. 42) reinforces, "[...] naturalistic observation and the study of documents are strategies that allow us to capture the shared meanings and dilemmas of the actors involved".

The analysis of the empirical and theoretical materials was organized through categories that emerged from the object of study itself: symbolic valorization, control of pedagogical work, teacher precariousness, ideology of accountability and pedagogical resistance. These categories allowed a systematization of data and the identification of discursive and contradictory patterns in public policies. According to Minayo (2007, p. 91), "[...] the elaboration of theoretical categories is an analytical construction that depends on the logic of the material and the theoretical foundation adopted". Also according to the author, "[...] categorization must allow a critical reading that goes beyond the textual surface" (p. 92).

The interpretation of the data also relied on the articulation of categories from the Marxist and post-structuralist theoretical traditions. Gramscian concepts such as hegemony, intellectuals and civil society were mobilized, fundamental to understand the role of the teaching profession in the dispute for societal projects. As Minayo (2007, p. 99) observes, "[...] critical hermeneutics allows us to establish an interpretation that recognizes the consensus, but also reveals the disagreements and contradictions present in the meanings". For the author, "[...] meaning emerges from the dialogue between text, context and theoretical framework" (p. 99).

In addition, Louis Althusser's contributions on ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) were incorporated, useful for understanding how the discourse of

valorization can operate as a mechanism for the reproduction of the dominant order. In this regard, Stake (2011, p. 41) points out that "[...] qualitative research is known for emphasizing the complexity of the political, economic, and cultural context, treating individuals as unique, even when subject to standardized mechanisms." This ideological dimension was also analyzed with the support of Apple and Ball, who discuss the commodification of education and the effects of performativity on school professionals.

The research prioritized a reflective and critical stance, understanding that the researcher is not neutral and that his interpretation is crossed by ethical and political positions. As Stake (2011, p. 41) states: "[...] qualitative researchers try to capture lived experience and its multiple meanings, without pretensions of absolute neutrality". Likewise, Minayo (2007, p. 11) warns that "[...] knowledge in the Social Sciences is built in the midst of the historicity and provisionality of phenomena, requiring interpretative openness and methodological rigor".

Objectivity, however, is not easily obtained because of its subtlety and complex implications. All knowledge of the world is affected by the predispositions of observers. [...] When scientists deal with topics such as personality, creativity, authoritarianism or social class, the possibilities of distortion increase considerably. [...] The rigid separation between the scientist's value systems and social facts as an object of analysis is proposed by numerous methodologists. They argue in favor of this stance that the social sciences should be neutral, apolitical, and uncompromising. In this sense, most classic manuals of social research propose the maximum distance between the researcher and the object researched (Gil, 2008, p. 117).

In this way, the comprehensive analysis made it possible to bring the institutional discourses closer to the concrete experiences of teachers described in the consulted works, revealing a field marked by contradictions, tensions and resistances. The articulation between theory and empirical material sought to respect the principle of internal coherence, as recommended by Minayo (2007, p. 90): "[...] the interpretation must be a synthesis between the research questions, the data obtained and the theoretical perspective adopted". Thus, methodological rigor was translated not into fixed schemes, but into attentive listening to the meanings attributed by the subjects to their practices.

Thus, the qualitative approach was not only justified as necessary, but also proved to be essential to access the meanings and symbolic disputes that permeate the teaching work in the neoliberal context. As Stake (2011, p. 30) summarizes: "[...] The essence of the qualitative approach lies in its interpretative integrity, in the commitment to the human and in the attempt to understand the lived experience in all its density". Therefore,

understanding the relations between discourse and practice required a sensitive, critical and politically situated methodology.

## **THE REVERSE SIDE OF EDUCATION: THE VALORIZATION OF TEACHING WORK UNDER THE LOGIC OF THE MINIMAL STATE AND THE ORDER OF CAPITAL**

Although public educational policies proclaim teacher valorization as a structuring principle, there is a significant distance between the normative statement and its material implementation. As established by the LDB (1996, p. 27), "[...] the valorization of school education professionals [...] includes initial and continuing training, the national professional salary floor, career plan for public teaching and adequate working conditions". However, according to the PNE (2014, p. 9), valuing education professionals is one of the foundations for improving the quality of teaching, which often ends up being exhausted in symbolic enunciation, without guaranteeing materiality to actions.

We also consider that an effective teacher appreciation, combined with the construction of the teachers' identity, is not built to the detriment of the meanings and senses given to the nature of the activity they perform, which even results in material recognition for the work developed. This valorization, therefore, demands recognizing the training and work of the teacher in all its complexity as, fundamentally, a condition for the full humanization of individuals, whether they are students or teachers. For this to occur, it is essential to develop the capacities that are required and mobilized by what identifies the teacher's professionalism, or the concrete essence of his social practice (Martins & Duarte, 2010, p. 29).

Although official documents recognize the role of the teacher, there is a rhetorical use of the concept of valorization that serves to mobilize consensus around educational reforms. As Shiroma, Moraes and Evangelista (2011, p. 41) point out, "[...] The term 'valorization' has been mobilized to garner social support for teacher accountability policies". Likewise, Cêa, Rummert and Gonçalves (2019, p. 14) state that "[...] valorization is treated as a rhetorical flag, shifting the debate from the objective conditions of work to symbolic and behavioral dimensions".

That is why, within the framework of the BNCC, the teacher is simultaneously celebrated and regulated. According to the document (BNCC, 2018, p. 16), "[...] the Base proposes a teacher training guided by competencies and skills aligned with the learning objectives". However, as Feldfeber and Oliveira (2008, p. 32) observe, "[...] Recent educational reforms appeal to a language of valorization as a strategy of political legitimation, not as an effective commitment."

The first task of direct responsibility of the Union will be the review of the initial and continuing training of teachers to align them with the BNCC. National action will be crucial in this initiative, since it is the sphere that is responsible for the regulation of higher education, the level at which most of these professionals are prepared. Given the evidence about the relevance of teachers and other members of the school team for the success of students, this is a fundamental action for the effective implementation of the BNCC. [...] The MEC's performance, in addition to technical and financial support, should also include the promotion of innovations and the dissemination of success stories (BNCC, 2018, p. 21).

However, the idea of valorization as a rhetorical element is also reinforced by the FUNDEB guidelines<sup>22</sup>. Although the fund provides funding for the remuneration of education professionals, according to the document (FUNDEB, 2020, p. 14), "[...] the complementation of the Union should prioritize equity and the appreciation of public basic education professionals". However, as Evangelista and Shiroma (2019, p. 90) warn, "[...] in the name of valorization, control and standardization mechanisms are instituted that weaken teacher autonomy, reducing training to a technical process, centered on competencies". In this logic, "[...] valorization has been called upon to operate as a symbolic attraction, although it does not act on the causes of precariousness" (Shiroma et. al., 2011, p. 44).

As soon as the discourse of valorization is incorporated into the normative structure of educational policies, it also carries an ideological charge that tends to blame the teacher for the crisis of education. According to Laval and Dardot (2014, p. 229), "[...] the neoliberal logic transforms the teaching function into an activity of control, subject to constant evaluations and individual accountability for school results". For the authors, "[...] the discourse of valorization is functional to the process of subjection of the teacher to business rationality" (Laval & Dardot, 2014, p. 231).

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<sup>22</sup> The Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and the Valorization of Education Professionals (FUNDEB), regulated by Constitutional Amendment No. 108/2020, is the main financing mechanism for public basic education in Brazil. Aimed at promoting the redistribution of resources among the federative entities, FUNDEB also has as its central objective the valorization of education professionals, by linking at least 70% of its resources to the payment of the remuneration of these workers. However, despite its structuring role, the effectiveness of FUNDEB is still limited by regional inequalities and the absence of complementary policies that ensure decent working conditions and teaching careers. As the text of the legislation states: "[...] FUNDEB resources should be used for actions to maintain and develop public basic education and to value education professionals" (BRASIL, 2020, p. 3), which highlights its strategic role, but also the challenges for its effective implementation. See: BRAZIL. *Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and for the Valorization of Education Professionals – FUNDEB*. Constitutional Amendment No. 108, of August 26, 2020. Brasília: Chamber of Deputies, 2020.



The management techniques (evaluation, design, standardization of procedures, decentralization) supposedly make it possible to objectify the individual's adherence to the norm of conduct that is expected of him, to evaluate his subjective commitment through tables and other recording tools of the 'management panel', under penalty of suffering sanctions in employment, salary and career development. [...] What is essential is not the truth of this measurement, but the type of power that is exercised 'deeply' over the subject impelled to 'surrender completely', to 'transcend' himself for the company, to 'motivate' himself more and more to satisfy the customer (Dardot & Laval, 2014, p. 256).

Although the reforms mention valorization as a strategy for improving quality, they have little dialogue with the real conditions of the teaching work. As Antunes and Alves (2009, p. 41) point out, "[...] the precariousness of the work of the teaching profession is inseparable from the process of intensification and flexibilization of working conditions". Furthermore, "[...] even though it is proclaimed as essential, the teaching work is devalued by the absence of policies that guarantee infrastructure, career and time for pedagogical work" (Antunes & Alves, 2009, p. 49).

However, there is also an attempt to subject teacher training to external control parameters. As Evangelista and Shiroma (2019, p. 85) point out, "[...] the teacher training project that is designed from the BNCC articulates competencies and skills with the logic of employability, regulating the teacher's work based on external expectations". Likewise, the authors state that "[...] the teacher is now seen as the executor of curricular prescriptions, with little space for critical reflection" (Evangelista & Shiroma, 2019, p. 87).

Even though the legal frameworks insist on the importance of the teacher, daily life shows another reality. As denounced by Cêa (2019, p. 132), "[...] Teaching in public schools continues to be marked by adverse conditions, such as outdated salaries, excessive working hours and absence of institutional support". In this regard, Caldart (2019, p. 123) adds: "[...] Teaching is often under a strong emotional and material overload, which compromises the very meaning of educational practice".

In this context, the teacher, even lulled by the siren song of easy solutions, is thrown on the defensive. Faced with the pressures to exercise the set of functions asked of him, he replies: 'But... I already do my best to teach, in the best possible way, a large number of classes, in three or four different schools, for so many classes of students that add up to more than five hundred, approaching a thousand, with a huge load of work and tests to correct... and I will still have to participate in the management of the school; the life of the community; and guide the students' studies?' [...] In the spirit of the neo-productivist conception, the leaders expect the teacher to perform a whole set of functions with maximum productivity and minimum expenditure, that is, with modest salaries (Saviani, 2013, p. 450).

As long as the discourse of innovation is valued, public policies tend to hold teachers responsible for results that depend on structural conditions. According to Diniz (2020, p. 58), "[...] the processes of institutional and individual evaluation of teachers have become mechanisms for moral and technical regulation of teaching work". In addition, "[...] the measurement of performance has been used as a criterion of merit, disregarding the objective inequalities between schools and territories" (Diniz, 2020, p. 61).

In such a way that the figure of the teacher is converted into a manager of goals, moving away from his role as a subject of educational practice. As Dardot and Laval (2014, p. 289) state, "[...] The new reason of the world redefines educational work based on the logic of the company of the self, in which the teacher is urged to maximize results and permanently self-manage". Such a process, according to the authors, "[...] transforms teacher training into an individual investment, making them responsible for their own employability and performance" (Dardot & Laval, 2014, p. 291).

As with workers in general, teachers are also urged to continuously improve themselves in an eternal process of learning how to learn. There are then refresher or refresher courses of the most varied types, referring to particular and fragmentary aspects of the teaching activity, all of them alluding to practical issues of everyday life. The market and its government spokespersons seem to want to instill in teachers the idea that they should become 'entrepreneurs of themselves', managing their careers as if it were a micro-enterprise, permanently evaluating their employability and efficiency (Saviani, 2013, p. 449).

In order for us to rethink valorization, it is necessary to rescue its emancipatory meaning and not just technical-bureaucratic. According to Netto (2019, p. 25), "[...] the recognition of teaching work as part of the historical struggle for rights involves breaking with the logic of meritocracy and individual accountability". In this sense, Shiroma et. al. (2011, p. 59) conclude: "[...] valuing the teacher is to guarantee real conditions for the exercise of teaching as a critical praxis, linked to an emancipatory social project".

That said, even if the State declares its commitment to public education, the neoliberal logic imposes a rationality that weakens this commitment through reforms and budget cuts. As Evangelista and Shiroma (2019, p. 88) point out: "[...] The educational reforms implemented under the aegis of fiscal adjustment and austerity promote cuts that compromise the quality of teaching and the recognition of teaching work." In addition, as Dardot and Laval (2014, p. 273) point out, "[...] austerity is less a response to the crisis than a political project that aims to reduce the state's capacity for action, weakening social rights."

In this way, education leaves the sphere of social rights and becomes an individual acquisition, a commodity that is obtained in the market according to the interests of each one and the ability of each one to obtain what they want. The market is a master narrative in educational discourse. [...] The deregulation of economic relations has been accompanied by the deregulation of social rights. Education is a good example of this process. [...] Neoliberal rhetoric, understanding that it is not the task of the State to interfere in the market, establishes a decrease in its economic activity by transferring its productive and service companies to the market. In practice, this has represented the unfeasibility of the State's capacity to make economic and social policy (Silva, 2003, p. 86).

That is why the logic of the minimal State not only reorganizes the financing of education, but also redefines the role of educational subjects, converting rights into performance goals. As Shiroma et al. (2011, p. 52): "[...] What is sought is no longer to guarantee the right to education, but to manage results based on indicators of school performance." In consonance, Harvey (2007, p. 70) argues that "[...] The neoliberal tendency is to empty the public content of social policies, submitting them to the logics of market and efficiency."

Thus, the processes of administrative reform, under the discourse of the modernization of the State, operate to transfer the management and financing of education to the private sphere. As Laval (2019, p. 141) states, "[...] the state's lack of responsibility is accompanied by devices that promote public-private partnerships and introduce business management mechanisms in schools". Similarly, Robertson et al. (2012, p. 10) point out that "[...] public-private partnerships are legitimized as a solution to the challenges of education, although they deepen inequalities and reinforce the logic of profit."

However, this withdrawal of the State takes place in the name of efficiency, masking the precariousness of school conditions and the fragility of teaching. According to Ball (2008, p. 129), "[...] managerial efficiency transforms the school into an organization focused on goals and results, obscuring pedagogical processes and the commitment to critical training". Likewise, Diniz (2020, p. 72) points out that "[...] the individual accountability of teachers is intensified, even in the absence of resources, structure and institutional support".

The managerial logic has had and still has, however, harmful effects when it tends to deny the importance of the 'core of the profession', that is, access to written and academic culture, privileging evaluation techniques, innovations, projects and partnerships whose real pedagogical interests are never thought of. [...] Pedagogical action presupposes a certainty 'ingrained in the body' about the value and social importance of the profession. To shake this certainty by trivializing teaching, wanting to transform the teacher into a technician or executive, paradoxically equivalent to reducing the efficiency of the educational system [...] (Laval, 2019, p. 135).

Although the official discourse supports the defense of equity, in practice the logic of competition and economic rationalization prevails, causing exclusions. As Dardot and Laval (2014, p. 259) explain: "[...] competition is established as an organizing principle of all social relations, including school relations, eroding the foundations of cooperation and solidarity". As Apple (2006, p. 82) adds, "[...] management models inspired by the private sector impose on school systems a logic of benchmarking<sup>23</sup>, evaluations and rankings, which ignore structural inequalities".

When the State reduces its function to regulation and monitoring, instead of ensuring working conditions, it contributes to the precariousness of public education. As Antunes and Alves (2009, p. 46) warn: "[...] the logic of productivity and competitiveness transforms the teaching work into a fragmented, precarious activity subjected to intense surveillance". In parallel, Ball (1994, p. 66) reinforces that "[...] the teacher is challenged to meet contradictory expectations, without being guaranteed adequate means to fulfill them".

Now, to the extent that it removes responsibility for social policies, the State also pushes the burden of permanent training and qualification onto individuals. As Biesta (2013, p. 63) observes, "[...] accountability shifts the focus from public education to individual performance, promoting a superficial and adaptive kind of professionalism." In consonance, Laval and Dardot (2014, p. 281) state that "[...] neoliberal subjectivation is based on individual self-valorization, transforming the teacher into a manager of his own effectiveness".

The novelty of corporate governance lies in the general, transversal and systematic character of the mode of management based on individual responsibility and self-control. [...] Being an 'entrepreneur of oneself' means being able to be the optimal instrument of one's own social and professional success. [...] 'Evaluation' has become the first means of guiding conduct by stimulating individual 'good performance'. It can be defined as a power relationship exercised by hierarchical superiors in charge of the expertise of the results, a relationship whose effect is an accounting subjectivation of the evaluated. Once the subject accepts to be judged based on these evaluations and suffer the consequences, he becomes constantly evaluable (Dardot & Laval, 2014, p. 228).

<sup>23</sup> The incorporation of the logic of *benchmarking* in school systems reflects the growing influence of management models in the organization of public education, based on the comparison of performance between schools, networks and countries as a way to induce competitive behaviors and decisions based on rankings and goals. This logic transforms education into a field of competition, where the results of external evaluations become central criteria for judging the effectiveness of education institutions and professionals. As Ball (2005, p. 150) warns, "[...] Benchmarking creates a culture of performativity in which teachers are constantly measured, compared, and judged, leading to the standardization of pedagogical practices and the erosion of professional autonomy." Thus, the logic of benchmarking shifts the focus from integral education and the social context of learning to quantitative indicators that favor management by results. See: BALL, Stephen J. *Education reform: a critical and post-structural approach*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2005.

Even if the legal frameworks maintain the language of the right to education, effective policies reflect an emptying of this right under the imperative of fiscal rationality. According to the PNE (2014, p. 15), "[...] teacher appreciation must be articulated with a career and remuneration policy consistent with the responsibility of education professionals". However, as Cêa, Rummert and Gonçalves (2019, p. 73) denounce, "[...] neoliberal reforms shift the focus from valorization to control and evaluation devices, converting recognition into monitoring."

Although public financing remains a formal principle, practice reveals the growing transfer of responsibilities to states, municipalities and even families. As Shiroma (2011, p. 58) explains: "[...] the decentralization of educational policies often results in regional inequalities and precariousness of supply conditions." Likewise, Diniz (2020, p. 64) points out that "[...] decentralization without adequate funding compromises the ability of local entities to ensure the right to quality education."

In fact, the federal and state governments are working with the logic of their exemption, transferring part of their responsibilities to the city halls, thus making it difficult for society to visualize where the root of the educational problems really lies. [...] The municipalization of elementary education was a strategy to reduce spending on education. Through agreements with the municipalities, the government transferred to them the responsibility for funding and managing the buildings, equipment and personnel of the 1st to 4th grade schools of the state network. This strategy gained strength thanks to the approval of FUNDEF [...] (APEOESP, 1999, p. 121-122).

Thus, as the State becomes a regulatory and inspection entity, it abdicates the function of guaranteeing social rights, directly impacting public schools. As argued by Evangelista et. al. (2019, p. 178), "[...] the financialization of educational policy subordinates the school to external imperatives, disregarding its territorial and human ties". Therefore, Apple (2014, p. 33) concludes: "[...] Educational reforms based on neoliberal logic are presented as neutral techniques, but they hide political projects that deepen exclusion."

Thus, even though educational reforms are presented as measures of modernization and efficiency, they operate under the business logic that transforms the school into a space of managerial control. As Laval (2019, p. 142) points out, "[...] the school of the twenty-first century is called upon to function as an organization oriented by goals and results, submitted to performance standards similar to those of the private sector". In a complementary way, Ball (2005, p. 144) states that "[...] teachers, under this

model, are challenged to meet bureaucratic expectations, having their pedagogical practice reduced to the application of measurable indicators".

Modern organization is economic and technical: the norms of action are not engraved in sacred bronze, but are defined by their 'operationality', by what they allow to be done. [...] The school defines itself more and more as an organization, but it remains in fact an institution [...] that has been abandoned by the values of the past. [...] The cold calculations of econometrics tend to take the place of the war of ideals. [...] The school is torn between a nostalgic return to a sense [...] and an escape forward that will increasingly transform it into a great machine for forming skills for the economy (Laval, 2019, p. 248).

That is why management by results, increasingly institutionalized, transforms the teacher into a technical executor, compromising his autonomy and ethical sense of teaching. As Edileuza da Silva (2020, p. 71) warns, "[...] business rationality promotes adherence to standardized curricula, restricting the role of the teacher to the fulfillment of previously defined tasks". In consonance, Martins and Duarte (2010, p. 92) point out that "[...] the accountability policy shifts the focus of the teaching work from the educational process to the fulfillment of goals external to the school".

As soon as the meritocratic logic is incorporated into public policies, it reinforces inequalities and denies the concrete conditions of teaching practice. As Feldfeber and Oliveira (2008, p. 37) analyze: "[...] the discourse of meritocracy disregards the structural inequalities between schools and territories, making the teacher responsible for the students' results". In the same way, Frigotto (1995, p. 28) criticizes that "[...] the pedagogy of competencies<sup>24</sup> has been used as a strategy to adapt to the labor market, disqualifying teaching knowledge".

However, this productivist rationality imposes rhythms and demands that make education professionals sick, both physically and emotionally. As denounced by Cêa, Rummert and Gonçalves (2019, p. 84), "[...] teacher illness intensifies in contexts of high demand and low appreciation, marked by precariousness and isolation". This is also what

<sup>24</sup> The pedagogy of competencies has been widely disseminated as a formative model in contemporary educational systems, especially under the influence of international organizations and reforms inspired by neoliberalism. This approach emphasizes the development of operational skills and attitudes considered useful for the labor market, subordinating educational objectives to the logic of employability, adaptability, and performance. In this context, knowledge is fragmented into measurable skills, emptying critical, ethical and citizen education. As Dardot and Laval (2014, p. 288) explain, "[...] the pedagogy of competencies is the direct application of the new reason of the world to the educational field, since it adapts individuals to the logic of competition and permanent evaluation". Thus, the pedagogy of competencies operates as an instrument of subjective control and reproduction of inequalities, masking its ideological function under the discourse of pedagogical modernization. See: DARDOT, Pierre; LAVAL, Christian. *The new reason of the world: an essay on neoliberal society*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2014.



Evangelista et al. (2019, p. 181), when they stated that "[...] teachers are pressured by unattainable goals, which affect their mental health and erode the meaning of the profession".

The objective of the latter [managerial reform] is to manage the school as a company. [...] Rather, it is a matter of changes that strengthen the dominance of controls and injunctions over teachers and, consequently, over students. [...] The logic is very clear: if the school is a company that produces a service, if it depends on measurable efficiency, [...] the 'educating organization' must have at its head an organizer who is capable of directing a 'team' and is responsible for the production of 'added value' by the 'company' (Laval, 2019, p. 144).

Although the reforms promise quality, they promote the symbolic devaluation of teaching by disregarding its intellectual and political dimension. As Apple (2006, p. 91) emphasizes: "[...] the teaching function is redefined as a technical activity, disconnected from any ethical or social project". In the same vein, Biesta (2010, p. 33) states that "[...] the reduction of teaching to the delivery of programmed content compromises the role of the teacher as a formative agent of critical subjects".

However, curricular standardization intensifies pedagogical control, restricting the teacher to the execution of external instructions. According to Shiroma, Moraes and Evangelista (2011, p. 63), "[...] the teacher is increasingly challenged to follow previously defined plans and materials, losing the possibility of collectively building the school curriculum". Similarly, Robertson et al. (2012, p. 117) point out that "[...] the global agenda of curriculum standardization has direct impacts on teacher autonomy and on the meanings attributed to teaching".

The creation of curricular bases is increasingly characterized by the prescription of tasks, the precise determination of notions and concepts – even if they threaten to dismantle the contents –, the definition of teaching times in each sequence, and the recommendation of the pedagogical path that the teacher should follow, or even the lesson plan (Laval, 2019, p. 289).

Now, as the logic of performativity is consolidated, performance evaluations become a criterion for legitimizing the teacher, breaking with the principles of educational praxis. As Antunes and Alves (2009, p. 52) denounce, "[...] performativity converts the teacher into an operator of indicators and results, reducing the complexity of the pedagogical act". Likewise, Diniz (2020, p. 66) warns that "[...] institutional evaluations impose external criteria of effectiveness that do not dialogue with the reality of public schools".

Despite the promise of innovation, the business model reproduces inequalities and limits the transformative meaning of education. As Dardot and Laval (2014, p. 284) argue, "[...] neoliberal rationality imposes the logic of capital on all dimensions of social life, subjecting educational work to the logic of profit and efficiency." In addition, Harvey (2007, p. 68) argues that "[...] Market-inspired reforms do not aim to emancipate, but to mold individuals according to the demands of capital."

Even if it is alleged that the teaching profession is valued, what is observed is the intensification of work without effective recognition. According to Dardot and Laval (2014, p. 276), "[...] The new spirit of capitalism values flexibility and adaptability, making the teacher vulnerable to constant change and the absence of stability." In the same way, Evangelista and Shiroma (2019, p. 93) state that "[...] the figure of the valued teacher hides the reality of a fragmented, surveilled, and increasingly lonely work."

The behaviors that are expected of teachers were defined more clearly, the tasks and objectives were formalized so that there was greater predictability of the results and a stricter control of the work performed. [...] The 'professionalization' of training in teacher training institutes is marked by the valorization of *ready-made pedagogical techniques* and ICTs<sup>25</sup> supposedly capable of reducing individual differences in practice. [...] Teachers have been 'invited' to put into practice calibrated 'innovations' and are increasingly evaluated by the degree of respect for innovative instructions. With subordination, the guaranteed result of the movement is infantilization (Laval, 2019, p. 177).

Thus, as capital instrumentalizes the school, the social role of education is emptied, and the teacher loses space as a political subject. As Saviani (2013, p. 452) summarizes: "[...] teaching, under the aegis of productivism, becomes an activity of execution, far from the commitment to the full formation of the student". In the same direction, Biesta (2013, p. 68) concludes: "[...] the role of the teacher must be rescued as a guide of formative processes that transcend the logic of efficiency".

<sup>25</sup> The so-called *ready-made pedagogical techniques* and the use of New Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been promoted as quick and effective solutions to educational challenges, especially in the context of neoliberal reforms. However, these strategies often disregard the complexity of the teaching-learning process, treating the teacher as a mere executor of external prescriptions. The promise of pedagogical innovation, instead of expanding teacher autonomy, often contributes to their deprofessionalization, by standardizing practices and imposing ready-made models of action. As Dardot and Laval (2019, p. 139) warn, "[...] the 'professionalization' of training in teacher training institutes is marked by the valorization of *ready-made pedagogical techniques* and ICTs supposedly capable of reducing individual differences in practice. [...] With subordination, the guaranteed result of the movement is infantilization." In this way, such devices serve more as instruments of control than as mediations for an emancipatory pedagogy. See: DARDOT, Pierre; LAVAL, Christian. *The new reason of the world: an essay on neoliberal society*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2014.

Thus, even though the official discourses on education insist on valuing teachers, the concrete reality experienced by teachers is marked by structural precariousness. As analyzed by Antunes and Alves (2009, p. 51): "[...] The work of teachers is characterized by multiple hours, contractual instability and low salaries, a reality that compromises their health and professional dignity". Likewise, as Diniz (2020, p. 75) points out, "[...] precariousness is not accidental, but the result of a deliberate policy of fiscal adjustment and rationalization of personnel expenses."

That is why initial and continuing education suffers from the absence of consistent public investments, compromising the quality of teaching and the autonomy of teachers. As Cêa, Rummert and Gonçalves (2019, p. 68) denounce: "[...] teacher training has been reduced to punctual and instrumental training, disconnected from the school reality and the training needs of teachers". In consonance, Martins and Duarte (2010, p. 85) state that "[...] the emptying of critical education is associated with the advance of pedagogical projects of a technician nature, which transform the teacher into the executor of prescriptions".

The training mostly in private HEIs subjected him to the forms and modalities through which capital has been obtaining greater appreciation, to the detriment of the training needs demanded by his professional performance, highlighting here the one related to the human formation of the Brazilian working class. [...] Face-to-face training modalities were replaced by distance education, in addition to the technological paraphernalia quoted as 'help' to the teacher in order to leave him 'free' from the work of planning and selecting knowledge, revealing itself to be the hard face of 'autonomy'. It is, in fact, a meticulous control of the teaching practice that aims to remove from the social being what should characterize it, intending to transform it into an everlasting, alienated source of profit for the entrepreneurs involved (Evangelista et. al., 2019, p. 52).

Given how the school routine is crossed by infrastructure shortages, teachers have to deal with physically degraded environments, lack of resources and functional overload. As evidenced by Evangelista et. al. (2019, p. 172): "[...] It is common for teachers to work in schools without a library, laboratories or basic materials, which makes planning and pedagogical practice difficult". In addition, as Feldfeber and Oliveira (2008, p. 43) point out, "[...] the scarcity of material conditions is treated as normality, shifting the responsibility to the individual effort of the teacher".

However, in addition to material precariousness, teachers are increasingly exposed to different forms of violence, both symbolic and institutional. According to Apple (2006, p. 95), "[...] the discourse of accountability hides subtle forms of professional devaluation, blaming the teacher for problems that transcend his direct action". Evangelista and

Shiroma (2019, p. 91) highlight that "[...] verbal aggression, public disqualifications and institutional humiliations become part of the daily life of teachers, naturalizing symbolic violence against teachers".

The way in which teachers have been disqualified in the eyes of public opinion in Brazil imposes fundamental questions. What is the reason for this disqualification? What reasons underlie this vast process of metamorphosis of the teacher into an incapable and inconsequential subject? Why do they bury him with policies whose assumption is to prove his incompetence? What is the meaning of policies whose discourse attests, in a contradictory way, that the teacher is a problem and a solution for education in the country? [...] Teacher depreciation has historical roots and its understanding demands that we seek to apprehend it in the movement of its constitution articulated with the totality that gives it reason for being (Evangelista et. al., 2019, p. 147).

Although symbolic violence is more frequent, cases of physical aggression are also part of the educational scenario, revealing institutional helplessness. As Caldart (2019, p. 129) observes, "[...] fear and insecurity are part of the routine of many teachers, especially in schools in the periphery, where there is an absence of the State as a guarantor of rights." In a complementary way, Shiroma, Moraes and Evangelista (2011, p. 60) warn that "[...] the absence of policies to protect and support teachers contributes to loneliness and physical and emotional exhaustion of the category".

Even if the complexity of the teaching work is recognized, educational policies continue to promote practices of individual blaming in the face of school failure. As Biesta (2013, p. 67) analyzes, "[...] Outcome-based accountability ignores the multiple dimensions of learning and reduces pedagogical work to a measurable delivery process." This is also what Ball (2008, p. 132) points out, when he states that "[...] failure is always attributed to the teacher, never to working conditions, structural poverty or school segregation".

Teacher training was under threat from capital – and continues to be. It became central to the educational reform and the teacher was projected as an effective professional, executor of tasks imposed on the school. Its field of preparation and work was scrutinized by neoliberal bourgeois interests. The teacher was encapsulated by policies in all fields: textbooks; evaluation system; curriculum; teaching of Portuguese language and mathematics; literacy methods; continuing education. Their presence is tolerated, but increasingly controlled; your choices are limited; his criticism is silenced. The school that remains is often a space of fear, loneliness, and illness (Evangelista et. al., 2019, p. 157).

While large-scale evaluation policies have become an instrument of control, they impose external criteria that disregard educational inequalities. As Dardot and Laval (2014, p. 283) point out, "[...] the State evaluates teachers as if they all acted under equal

conditions, hiding the social and structural determinations that influence school performance". According to Robertson et. al. (2012, p. 112), "[...] The logic of accountability converts evaluation into an instrument of punishment and reinforcement of hierarchies between schools and professionals".

Now, the subjective impacts of this logic have been devastating, affecting teachers' self-esteem and sense of belonging. As Edileuza da Silva (2020, p. 77) points out, "[...] the teacher is subjected to permanent symbolic surveillance, which undermines his self-confidence and makes it difficult for him to remain in his career". In the same vein, Laval (2019, p. 139) observes that "[...] teaching professionalism is destructured by a system that claims to value it, but treats it as a problem to be managed".

Thus, the fragmentation of the teaching work results in a feeling of impotence, exhaustion and dehumanization. As Antunes and Alves (2009, p. 49) point out: "[...] the short time for reflection, the excess of tasks and the demand for immediate results prevent the teacher from fully exercising his educational function". This is also stated by Shiroma (2011, p. 62), when he highlights that "[...] the teaching work has become a territory of intensification, where pedagogy is subordinated to the logic of urgency and performance".

[...] Teaching work, that is, work that is subject to fragmentation, hierarchization, disqualification and, consequently, alienation, became evident 'from the moment that the teacher's intellectual thought is progressively eliminated and replaced by the repetitive execution of functions and the machinery of the system'. In this process of fragmentation, the teacher becomes a specialist in the discipline he teaches and does not establish relationships or mediations with social reality or with the other disciplines (Martins & Duarte, 2010, p. 15).

That said, even though educational policies are immersed in the neoliberal logic, contradictions emerge in the school routine, giving rise to processes of teacher resistance. As Caldart (2019, p. 137) points out, "[...] teachers have built forms of pedagogical resistance based on the valorization of community practices and articulation with social movements". Likewise, Evangelista and Shiroma (2019, p. 97) highlight that "[...] teacher resistance is expressed in the refusal of standardized teaching models and in the search for practices that rescue the critical dimension of education".

That is why unions and teachers' collectives play a fundamental role in the struggle for decent working conditions and for an emancipatory public school. According to Cêa, Rummert and Gonçalves (2019, p. 86), "[...] The mobilizations of teachers have been fundamental to denounce the effects of the reforms and propose alternatives that put

valorization on another political level." This is also stated by Antunes and Alves (2009, p. 61), when they argue that "[...] Unions, even in the face of the difficulties imposed by neoliberal logic, continue to be spaces of collective resistance and the construction of counter-hegemonic agendas."

However, resistance initiatives are not always organized in an organized way; they often emerge from everyday life, in pedagogical gestures that challenge the logic of performativity. As Martins and Duarte (2010, p. 103) state, "[...] It is in the classroom space that the teacher, even under pressure, elaborates strategies to re-signify his practice, resisting the technocratic logic". In consonance, Biesta (2013, p. 71) points out that "[...] Democratic education requires that teachers have space to exercise professional judgment and act with ethical responsibility."

Teaching is, in its deepest sense, a gesture, a way of resisting the commodification of life and education, the dehumanization of school bonds and the logic of productivity that impoverishes educational practices. It is in the daily life of the school that counter-hegemonic practices are affirmed, often silent, but powerful in their capacity to affirm life and education as a right. [...] Resistance, therefore, is not limited to large acts or organized movements, but is also expressed in small gestures, in attentive listening, in the construction of ethical and solidary relationships with students, in the boldness to think differently, to teach beyond what is prescribed (Martins & Duarte, 2010, p. 108).

Now, rethinking teacher valuation requires shifting the debate from the technical level to a political and ethical perspective, which recognizes the teacher as a historical subject. As Frigotto (1995, p. 30) warns: "[...] the valorization of teaching requires the reconstruction of the social role of the teacher as an intellectual worker, articulated with the broader struggle for social rights". In addition, Feldfeber and Oliveira (2008, p. 49) argue that "[...] Educational reforms need to be guided by listening to teachers and by the collective reconstruction of the meanings of teaching work".

In such a way that teacher resistance is also expressed in the claim for pedagogical autonomy, defended as a condition for an emancipatory practice. As Shiroma, Moraes and Evangelista (2011, p. 66) state: "[...] autonomy is a condition for the construction of a school committed to popular interests and to the critical formation of subjects". According to Diniz (2020, p. 77), "[...] the recognition of autonomy implies facing the constraints of management by results and the devices of control over the teaching practice".



The new management is, in this sense, an integral part of the retraction of the political, as it tries to transfer to more or less autonomous local entities – and, ultimately, to individuals impelled to 'innovate' – tasks that were previously the State's. Therefore, the latter relies on grassroots innovators and dynamic entrepreneurs to find unprecedented solutions to the social and psychological ills of market societies, even if it has to offer an 'after-sales service' to those left to fend for themselves. 'The school is its own resource' is a mantra that is repeated to say that each school must manage on a case-by-case basis, even if the problems it faces are a consequence of a general social state and, often, of the market logics that weigh directly on it (Laval, 2019, p. 146).

Although the evaluation and control mechanisms are naturalized in the reforms, there is growing contestation on the part of educators and their organizations. As Robertson et. al. (2012, p. 130), "[...] Resistance to standardized assessment has intensified, especially when teachers denounce its inadequacy to local realities". In addition, Apple (2014, p. 51) points out that "[...] Teacher movements have built powerful counter-discourses, defending an education committed to social justice".

Even if fragmented, resistance actions accumulate significant experiences that can be articulated in collective pedagogical projects. As Edileuza da Silva (2020, p. 82) observes: "[...] the experiences of real appreciation of teaching are linked to the construction of bonds, mutual recognition and democratic participation in schools". Ball (2005, p. 151) also recognizes that "[...] the forms of resistance multiply in the gaps of the system, from subversive pedagogical practices to movements for alternative curriculum".

In a human environment, tensions, conflicts, dilemmas, and feelings flow, as we learn a lot by working collectively. In this way, we discover new relationships, reformulate or reconfigure known facts, tread paths to discover the meaning of what is being built. According to Machado (2002, p. 103): 'we lack collective projects, which stimulate individual actions, articulating them in the construction of greater meaning. As well as the satisfaction of basic needs in a biological or economic sense, we need to participate in broader projects, which transcend our personal limits and challenge our actions, our dreams, of a broader political-social meaning' (Edileuza da Silva, 2020, p. 67).

While a transformative education is desired, it is necessary to reconfigure the bases of teacher appreciation, including material conditions, respect for diversity and active listening. According to Laval (2019, p. 145), "[...] Appreciation needs to be understood as a political commitment to the common good, and not as compensation for productivity." Likewise, Saviani (2013, p. 455) argues that "[...] valorization must have as its horizon the emancipation of education workers and their active insertion in the construction of a fairer societal project".

As soon as resistance is recognized as a creative power, the possibility of reversing the symbolic emptying of teaching is expanded. As Dardot and Laval (2014, p. 287) point out: "[...] Resistance to neoliberalism implies the creation of new democratic institutions that value the commons, dialogue and cooperation." Harvey (2007, p. 75) also points out that "[...] The social struggles that oppose the neoliberal project must recover the collective meaning of politics, where teachers play a central role in the dispute for rights."

## CONCLUSION

In the light of the analyses undertaken, it became evident that the official discourse of valuing the teaching work, although recurrent in public educational policies, has operated as an ideological device that legitimizes the intensification of control over pedagogical practice, the precariousness of working conditions and the displacement of responsibility for school failure to the teachers themselves. Under the logic of the neoliberal minimal State, valorization becomes empty rhetoric, emptied of material and political commitment to the subjects of education.

Although legal frameworks such as the PNE, LDB and FUNDEB recognize the importance of valuing teachers, their formulations, in practice, do not ensure the rights they proclaim. On the contrary, they have served as a normative shield for reforms that deepen the State's lack of responsibility and reinforce a managerial, productivist and performative rationality within schools. In this way, the teacher is converted into a policy operator, monitored by indicators and urged to manage his career as if it were a company, annulling his autonomy and reducing his practice to a technical function.

In addition, the study demonstrated that multilateral discourses and global agendas of curriculum standardization and evaluation contribute decisively to this reconfiguration of the teaching role, shifting the meaning of valorization to criteria of performance and employability. Thus, what we see is a moral and technical accountability of the teacher, whose supposed valuation is measured by the ability to adapt to goals, rankings and results, to the detriment of his critical formation and his insertion as a historical subject in the construction of the educational project.

Nevertheless, the subjective impacts of this logic are devastating. Teachers face physical and emotional exhaustion, institutionalized symbolic violence, and the loss of the ethical sense of their practice. Training policies and regulation mechanisms reinforce the fragmentation of work, deprofessionalization and isolation, preventing the construction of a

collective, critical and engaged teaching identity. The pedagogy of skills, the Taylorist models and the business management of schools contribute to this scenario of dehumanization.

However, in the midst of this adverse situation, teacher resistance emerges as a creative power. Teachers, unions and collectives have been elaborating counter-discourses and counter-hegemonic pedagogical practices that claim autonomy, listening, critical training and the centrality of the human bond in the educational process. These movements, although fragmented, signal possibilities for reconstructing the political sense of valorization and of the public school as a space for integral education.

In this way, the analysis made it possible to show that the valorization of teaching, as formulated and implemented in the neoliberal context, does not correspond to a commitment to social justice, but rather acts as a strategy to legitimize reforms that deepen inequalities. Reversing this scenario requires, first of all, unveiling the ideological character of current educational policies and strengthening the processes of organization and resistance of education workers, rescuing valorization as an inseparable part of the struggle for a more just, democratic and solidary society.

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