



**YOUTH PROTAGONISM IN PROJECT LIFE TEXTBOOKS OF THE NEW HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION**

***O PROTAGONISMO JUVENIL EM LIVROS DIDÁTICOS DE PROJETO DE VIDA DO NOVO ENSINO MÉDIO***

***EL PROTAGONISMO JUVENIL EN LIBROS DIDÁCTICOS DE PROYECTO DE VIDA DEL NUEVO ENSEÑANZA MEDIA***



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**ABSTRACT:** Considering the consequences of the reform of the new high school, this article analyzes the neoliberal reflexes in the discursive production of youth protagonism present in textbooks of Life Project. As a theoretical apparatus, discursive studies are mobilized under the inspiration of Michel Foucault from concepts such as discourse, utterance, discursive formation, truth, power, and neoliberalism. Regarding the methodology, the study aligns with a descriptive-interpretative and documentary perspective based on qualitative. The corpus comprises statements extracted from nine Life Project textbooks approved by the National Program of Books and Didactic Material (PNLD), 2021 edition. The analysis makes it possible to emphasize that the construction of the subject as protagonist operates from the relations of knowledge and power evidenced in a close relationship with the designs of the market.

**KEYWORDS:** Youth protagonism. Neoliberalism. Life Project. Labor market. New High School.

**RESUMO:** Considerando os desdobramentos da Reforma do novo ensino médio, o presente artigo analisa os reflexos neoliberais na produção discursiva do protagonismo juvenil presentes em livros didáticos de Projeto de Vida. Como aparato teórico, mobilizam-se os estudos discursivos sob a inspiração de Michel Foucault, a partir de conceitos como discurso, enunciado, formação discursiva, verdade, poder e neoliberalismo. Em relação à metodologia, o estudo se alinha a uma perspectiva descritivo-interpretativa e documental, de base qualitativa. O corpus compreende enunciados extraídos de nove livros didáticos de Projeto de Vida aprovados pelo Programa Nacional do Livro e do Material Didático (PNLD), edição de 2021. As análises possibilitam enfatizar que a construção do sujeito como protagonista opera a partir das relações de saber e poder evidenciadas em uma relação de íntima proximidade com os desígnios do mercado.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Protagonismo juvenil. Neoliberalismo. Projeto de Vida. Mercado de trabalho. Novo Ensino Médio.

**RESUMEN:** Considerando los desdoblamientos de la Reforma de la nueva enseñanza media, el presente artículo analiza los reflejos neoliberales en la producción discursiva del protagonismo juvenil presentes en libros didáticos de Proyecto de Vida. Como aparato teórico, se movilizan los estudios discursivos bajo la inspiración de Michel Foucault, a partir de conceptos como discurso, enunciado, formación discursiva, verdad, poder y neoliberalismo. En relación a la metodología, el estudio se alinea a una perspectiva descriptiva-interpretativa y documental, de base cualitativa. El corpus comprende enunciados extraídos de nueve libros didáticos de Proyecto de Vida aprobados por el Programa Nacional del Libro y del Material Didático (PNLD), edición de 2021. Los análisis posibilitan enfatizar que la construcción del sujeto como protagonista opera a partir de las relaciones de saber y poder evidenciadas en una relación de íntima proximidad con los designios del mercado.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Protagonismo juvenil. Neoliberalismo. Proyecto de Vida. Mercado de trabajo. Nuevo Enseñanza Media.

## Introduction

The high school reform (Law No. 13.415/2017), which is presented as 'new,' had already emerged in the 1990s as a way to establish the correlation between school and the labor market (Brasil, 2017). In a context reflecting the early impacts of neoliberalism, under the aegis of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration (1995-2002), education was no longer seen as a space for the comprehensive formation of the individual in social, personal, and professional aspects. Instead, it began to be viewed as a means to meet the market demands of contemporary society, thereby accentuating the inequalities that were already part of that universe. Aligned with this trend, the current high school reform was established in a hasty and undemocratic manner following the 'juridical-parliamentary-media' coup (Ramos, 2019, p. 3) and the subsequent removal of President Dilma Rousseff.

The change was prompted by the understanding of "[...] new educational demands arising from the acceleration of knowledge production, increased access to information, the creation of new means of communication, and the changing interests of adolescents and young people" (Brasil, 2011, p. 1, our translations). The reform initially appeared as Provisional Measure (PM) 746, dated September 22, 2016, and was later established through the enactment of Law No. 13.415/17, which created the Policy for the Promotion of the Implementation of Full-Time High Schools.

The changes include an increase in the annual school hours from 800 to 1,400 hours. Additionally, new curricular arrangements were introduced, guided by the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC), resulting in the division of curricular components into basic general education and formative itineraries: I - languages and their technologies; II - mathematics and its technologies; III - natural sciences and their technologies; IV - applied human and social sciences; V - technical and professional education (Brazil, 2018), to be fulfilled throughout the school journey.

In this context, discourses that emphasize youth protagonism and life projects are incorporated into the educational project that primarily prepares students for market demands. To be a protagonist is to structure one's own life project, as it becomes the student's responsibility to achieve success in their academic and, more importantly, professional career. Thus, according to the Base, it is necessary to "recognize young people as active participants in the societies in which they are inserted, which are also so dynamic and diverse" (Brasil, 2018, p. 463, our translation). This notion also suggests that young people are not only active participants in society but also agents of change for the entire social body, which results in the

state's withdrawal from its responsibility to "lead and facilitate strategies and material conditions for this citizen to live with social dignity" (Costa, 2020, p. 53, our translation).

To meet the demands arising in this context, the life project, an integrative component of the New High School (NEM), ceases to be seen as an optional element and gains the status of a curricular proposition that must be developed from the first year of this stage of basic education. As stated in the *High School Implementation Guide* (Brasil, 2018), the life project is the backbone of this final level of education, aiming to develop self-knowledge, autonomy, and protagonism in students, thus allowing young people to understand their strengths and weaknesses (Passegi; Cunha, 2020).

Given the above, this study aims to analyze the neoliberal reflections in the discursive production of youth protagonism in life project textbooks. Methodologically, it is configured as a descriptive-interpretative work, analyzing four didactic collections of life projects. For this study, the third axis of the reading trajectory, which involves the relationship between the individual and the labor market, will be presented.

The analyzed collections for this study are as follows: a) "*Projeto de Vida: construindo o futuro*" by Hanna Cebel Danza and Antonio Morgado da Silva (LDPV01)<sup>3</sup>, published by Ática; b) "*#Vivências*" by Isabella Moreira de Avelar Alchorne and Ana Sofia Carvalho Oliveira (LDPV02), published by Scipione; c) "*(Des) envolver e (Trans) formar: projeto de vida*" by Itale Luciane Cericato (LDPV04), published by Ática; d) "*Se liga na vida*" by Wilton Ormundo, Cristiane Siniscalchi, and Carolina C. D'Agostini (LDPV08), published by Moderna.

Consequently, the method employed is the archeogenealogical one, grounded in the conceptions of Foucaultian Discourse Studies (Foucault, 2012; 2014). The choice of this method is evident, as we consider discourse as a social and historical practice, allowing us to study how discursive practices emerge and relate, in addition to observing, "[...] in the textual discursive, the traces of a memory work in the materiality of these discourses" (Navarro, 2020, p. 14, our translation).

Beyond this section, the work is organized into three topics. The first topic discusses the conceptions of discourse and statement and the neoliberal implications in the constitution of discourses about youth protagonism. The following topic describes the analyses of life project textbooks, which mainly address youth protagonism in the context of the world of work. Finally, we outline the concluding considerations.

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<sup>3</sup> To refer to the collections, we used the LDPV coding (Life Project Textbook) plus the numbering that indicates the order of the textbook in the sequence of the nine collected collections.

## On Discourse and Neoliberalism

Studying discourse, in general terms, does not imply reducing it to a structuralist method, but rather analyzing “[...] this field in which issues of the human being, consciousness, origin, and subject are manifested, intersect, overlap, and are specified” (Foucault, 2014, p. 51, our translation). From this perspective, discourse, taken as historical materiality, allows man to conceive his existence, as the construction of subjects and objects is the result of what is said about them (Giacomoni; Vargas, 2010, our translation). Therefore, discourse is

Historical – a fragment of history, unity, and discontinuity within history itself, which raises the issue of its limits, its cuts, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality, and not its abrupt emergence amid the complicities of time (Foucault, 2014, p. 164, our translation).

Thus, discursive practices result from different historical modulations, which at certain times prohibit their realization and at other times allow certain discursive practices to be perpetuated over time. In this sense, discourse constitutes a space that enables the manifestation of powers in the fields of sexuality, politics, and other sectors, and cannot be understood merely as “[...] a thin surface of contact or confrontation between a reality and a language, the intertwining of a lexicon and an experience” (Foucault, 2014, p. 87, our translation). According to Foucault (2014), discourse can also be understood as a set of statements that rely on the same discursive formation. For the philosopher, the statement is

A function of existence that crosses a domain of structures, hence one should speak of an enunciative function, in which the relationship between the statement and what it enunciates does not consist of the relationship between the signifier and the signified, the name and what it designates, the proposition and the referent, the sentence and its meaning (Foucault, 2014, p. 17, our translation).

Thus, although endowed with materiality, the statement cannot be reduced to the logic of grammatical characters, as it is much more an event that grammatical logic could not fully exhaust. Therefore, it exceeds the limits of the sentence, speech acts, and propositions. In this relationship, the statement is distinguished from the sentence by not resembling grammatical and linguistic forms and, furthermore, by not being restricted to a verbalization subject to rules. Hence, a photograph, a map, and a chart can be statements “as long as they are taken as manifestations of knowledge and, therefore, are accepted, repeated, and transmitted” (Veiga-Neto, 2003, p. 94, our translation).



From this perspective, when discussing the notion of the statement and differentiating it from linguistic materialization, Foucault (2014) exemplifies that the letters arranged on the keyboard of a typewriter cannot be considered a statement, as, although they materialize linguistically, they do not meet the properties that characterize it. However, the sequence of letters A, Z, E, R, T arranged in a typewriting manual corresponds to the statement of the alphabetical order adopted by French typewriters; that is, the statement comes to be defined by its conditions of existence, because within a writing system, it performs a certain enunciative function.

Thus, it can be said that the statement exceeds structural limits, becoming more a function, a condition of existence, than merely a linguistic resource, given its specific relationship with the subject. From this, it is understood that discourse appropriates the statement as an event within a play of relations established among “[...] institutions, economic and social processes, forms of behavior, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization” (Foucault, 2014, p. 167, our translation). According to the author,

Thus conceived, discourse ceases to be what it is for exegetical attitude and becomes a good that consequently, from its very existence (and not simply in its practical applications), raises the question of power; a good that is, by nature, an object of struggle, and a political struggle at that” (Foucault, 2014, p. 168, author’s emphasis, our translation).

Discourse, conceived as a practice of social and historical knowledge that maintains a relationship with other statements from the same discursive formation, is not neutral. This non-neutrality of discourse refers to the power relations determined as it is enunciated. For the French author, the subject is a mediator of this power that moves through various spaces. However, more than that, the subject is constituted by this power while simultaneously exercising it, being its primary effect. Thus, the subject and power are not fixed materialities but positions to be occupied/exercised. In “*The Microphysics of Power*” (2012), Foucault refers to power as an exercised action, meaning that power only exists through practices and relations that manifest it.

Furthermore, we understand power as a network whose relations permeate the entire social body—school, prison, hospital, asylum, state, factory, and family-supporting, articulating, and integrating each other (Maia, 1995). Thus, it is of interest to observe “[...] historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses that are in themselves neither true nor false” (Foucault, 2012, p. 7, our translation). From this perspective, when discussing the reshaping of the exercise of power in society, we turn to understanding neoliberalism as a

tool responsible for the decentralization of the idea of collectivity, thus shifting to the conception of the subject as the main element in self-governance.

In this way, neoliberalism presents itself as “[...] a normative system endowed with a certain efficiency, that is, capable of internally guiding the effective practice of governments, companies and, beyond them, millions of people who are not necessarily aware of it” (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 15, our translation). Moreover, it is essential to understand the relationships created by neoliberal rationality, the subjectivities, and behaviors, because more than questioning the destruction of rules, institutions, and rights, it is essential to understand “the form of our existence, that is, the way we are led to behave, to relate to others and ourselves” (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 15, our translation). In this sense, neoliberalism is established as a system of rules and norms that permeates governmental practices, institutional policies, and managerial styles. However, this system exceeds the market sphere and produces “[...] an ‘accounting’ subjectivity by creating systematic competition among individuals” (Dardot; Laval, 2016, p. 29, our translation).

The reverberation of this neoliberal logic, which appropriates freedom and makes the subject submit to it, has left no social sphere untouched. In this context, education is also seen as part of this business logic that aims to prepare individuals for the competitive market. It is not by chance that a reform for secondary education was approved, proposing an association between regular education, basic disciplines, and technical education, ensuring that young individuals leave this stage of education with resources to enter the labor market. Reaffirming the business logic, we observe “[...] an accentuated association of curricular policies with the forces of the private sector, led by a series of philanthropic foundations linked to large business conglomerates” (Silva; Lima Neto, 2023, p. 4, our translation).

In this neoliberal scenario, in which individuals are displaced from their real subjective and material conditions, it is observed that the system’s objective is to transform everyone into commodities. Thus, a state reform is envisaged in which the bourgeoisie seeks to reclaim its accumulation rate at any cost (Kossak; Vieira, 2022). Hence, the reforms do not arise from real collective needs but from private interests that shape public education policies. For this reason, Provisional Measure (MP) 746, dated September 22, 2016, was introduced, which later, with the promulgation of Law No. 13.415/17, created the Policy for the Promotion of the Implementation of Full-Time Secondary Schools.

According to the Implementation Guide for the New Secondary Education, the changes are manifested through amendments to the LDB, the New Curricular Guidelines for Secondary

Education (DCEM), and the development of the BNCC aimed at this educational stage. Thus, the New Secondary Education introduces three major fronts.

The development of students' protagonism and their life projects, through guided choices about what they want to study; the enhancement of learning, by increasing the study hours; and the guarantee of common learning rights for all young people, by defining what is essential in the curricula based on the BNCC (Brasil, 2018, p. 6, our translation).

Moreover, the guide circulates the discourse emphasizing the need to listen to teachers and young people regarding the development of the flexible part of the curriculum, showing that the NEM considers them as protagonists, given that they actively participate in shaping the school curriculum in which they are embedded. However, several questions arise: Why is there a focus on listening during the implementation phase? Why were these individuals not consulted during the actual formation of the reform? Why are they considered protagonists only at this stage?

Such questions lead us to analyze that the discourse on the need for protagonism is crafted more as a way to mitigate criticism of the reform than as a means to truly value these individuals in the process of implementing secondary education. According to Silva (2018), the manner in which the project was quickly announced and approved undermines the constitutional rights of the Democratic Rule of Law, as it limits the space for debate, outlining a project “[...] of an authoritarian, undemocratic, and unilateral nature” (Silva, 2018, p. 21, our translation).

Given the above, we understand that the reform, under the discourse proposing to modify the curriculum, aims to disqualify and devalue education. Thus, as the State's participation diminishes, business groups step in to fill this gap, leading to a privatization process. Laval, in his work *A escola não é uma empresa*<sup>4</sup> (2019), highlights the term ‘neoliberal school’ to elucidate education as an essentially private good, whose main value is economic. For the author, this privatization influences both the knowledge produced within the institutions and the social bond itself, as “[...] the affirmation of the full autonomy of individuals without constraints, except those they voluntarily recognize, corresponds to institutions that seem to have no other *raison d'être*” (Laval, 2019, p. 17, our translation) other than their interests.

In line with this, the accumulation of capital increasingly depends on the capacity for innovation and workforce training, prompting the need for an education system that meets this

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<sup>4</sup> The School is Not a Business.



market demand as a quick response, delivering individuals prepared to integrate into these markets (Laval, 2019). Thus, we are interested in understanding how this conception of the labor market is integrated into the educational collections of life project programs.

### Youth Protagonism and the World of Work

There are regulatory mechanisms for high school students to develop a protagonist profile, in relation to themselves, others, and the world of work. This conception is associated with the idea of market-oriented education, which, by training for the market and prioritizing cheap labor, includes in its documents and educational materials an effective discussion about the professional future of these individuals. In this context, the life project program proposes a space where personal and professional fulfillment go hand in hand.

In this scenario, the educational collection LDPV08 explores, in the final unit of the didactic material, the first step for students to understand what is meant by the labor market and professional activity. The book module to which we refer is titled “Preparando o Terreno<sup>5</sup>”, it is used metaphorically to demonstrate the introduction to the topic, highlighting the stance assumed by the enunciating subject. From this perspective, there is initially a detailing of future professions and those that will cease to exist with the advancement of technology, especially artificial intelligence.

According to the stance taken by the discourse subject, robots will be capable of replacing humans in telemarketing services, bus ticketing, supermarket cashier roles, and other specific repetitive tasks. On the other hand, the manual highlights that other professions will emerge due to market demands, such as: augmented reality designer; biotechnology researcher; nanotechnology biochemist; DNA editor; 3D printing designer; drone developer and technician; Big Data strategist; data engineer; optimization analyst (Ormundo; Siniscalchi; D’Agostini, 2020).

The professions exemplified in the book essentially focus on technological activities that require specific training. Generally, these trainings are not socially accessible to young people attending public education, as they are more accessible to a wealthier audience, which does not predominantly correspond to the profile of students in our schools. In contrast, the manual exposes, alongside future professions, those at risk of disappearing, which typically correspond to jobs held by lower-income classes, such as drivers, stock clerks, credit analysts,

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<sup>5</sup> Preparing the Ground.

and rural workers. This discourse reaffirms the existing social inequality in the country, demonstrating that the race for the job market is not equal for everyone. In this regard, it is asserted that "manual labor, especially in rural areas, will disappear in twenty years. Machines will plow, plant, monitor, determine irrigation timing, and harvest" (Ormundo; Siniscalchi; D' Agostini, 2020, p. 106, our translation).

The conditions prompting this discourse are anchored in neoliberal rationality. Thus, individuals need to be constantly reinvented to secure their place in the market. Therefore, it is not just about demonstrating the projections for the world of work, but also about warning against what should not be a choice. Still, within this discussion, the book proposes an activity for students to answer the following questions.

- 1) What "Plan B" would you have if your choice had to change?
- 2) If you could program a robot capable of performing a profession or operating in an area of your interest, what human skills would you seek to incorporate into it?
- 3) The author presents some professions that may emerge in the future, such as augmented reality designing and DNA editing. What other professions do you imagine could arise based on current demands? (Ormundo; Siniscalchi; D' Agostini, 2020, p. 106, our translation).

The commands in the questions direct young people to reflect on the professions that are part of their life project. In the first question, there is a return to the knowledge produced by the reform, from a neoliberal perspective, that flexibility is an indispensable competence for being a protagonist in the world of work, thus becoming a power device over these bodies. In addition, students are invited to respond to what human skills they would incorporate into a robot, demonstrating the coexistence of both in the job market. Finally, they are asked to think about current demands and indicate which professions may emerge from them, which corresponds to an education based primarily on market requirements.

If we pay attention to the statements, we observe the change proposed in the world of work, a result of biocognitive capitalism. This is because, according to Marazzi (2000), growth is understood through human activities, whether in terms of communicational, relational, creative, or innovative skills. When the textbook questions the need for change, it establishes a relationship between knowledge and power, in which individuals are subjected to a creative need to reinvent themselves for the market. Similarly, professions aligned with new technological resources, such as augmented reality designing and DNA editor, reflect the market's demand for an innovative education. This means that the process of valorization

operates based on the exploitation of "[...] human beings' capacities for learning, relationship, and social (re)production" (Fumagalli, 2016, p. 12, our translation).

Thus, these statements are associated with a set of other statements that also promote protagonism and the labor market, where the individual is seen as primarily responsible for their personal and professional success. In line with this, LDPV01 in block four, titled "responsible decision-making," begins with two questions: "do you feel secure in taking responsibility for your decisions?" and "what do you need to feel that you have made the right decision?" (Danza; Silva, 2020, p. 167, our translation). These statements place the young person as the main element in decision-making regarding their life project, assuming a role of protagonism. However, it is essential to understand that these choices are never associated with a state project or guaranteed by rights common to all; in this education that prepares for work, "[...] the emergence of this individual is associated with the process of precariousness of working conditions, weakening of workers' unions, and cuts to public goods and social services" (Daniel; Silva, 2023, p.24, our translation).

In this scenario, the modern social contract in which the State revealed itself as a fundamental element in protecting the individual is replaced by the individual's accountability (Daniel; Silva, 2023). This means that the neoliberal subject needs to be fully engaged in professional activity and acting upon themselves to strengthen themselves in competition. Therefore, it is conceived as "[...] owner of human capital and has the responsibility to build their path in the face of the risks of uncertain times" (Daniel; Silva, 2023, p. 27, our translation). Thus, the association between the domains of protagonism and work portrays a power relationship that prevails over high school students with the purpose of meeting this new rationale of the world.

In this endeavor, the LDPV01 collection brings an activity that asks students to create a menu of professions, considering their interests, current major careers, and average salaries. Furthermore, it suggests that students categorize professions into general areas, artistic, creative, and cultural professions; assistance professions; scientific professions; commercial professions; communication and information professions; management professions; health and well-being professions; future professions; professions linked to nature and natural resources; technological professions (Danza; Silva, 2020), as a way to facilitate the visualization of the 'menu'. The material also ensures that "the profession menu should include: profession name, description, social relevance, characteristics of the job market, average salary" (Danza; Silva, 2020, p. 170, our translation).

The discourse in the textbook reveals a strategy of governmentality that addresses the subject as a holder of choices, making explicit reference to the very nomenclature chosen by the manual, given that the menu functions as an element where the individual chooses what appeals to them. However, the unsaid aspect of this discourse is that not everyone can frequent the same restaurants; that is, not everyone will have the same choices available. Thus, within a menu limited by their social conditions, young people will choose what best fits their context, driving the machinery of cheap labor in the job market. Continuing with these career choices, the book points out that:

In a job market that offers multiple career options, it becomes essential to know how to identify the benefits and disadvantages of each profession, the affinities and incompatibilities with one's profile, and above all, the positive and negative effects that a profession may have on one's life (Danza; Silva, 2020, p. 171, our translation).

This excerpt is located on the topic of self-immersion and presents in its repetitive materiality the notion that the job market reveals multiple career options as if all could be chosen by any student, regardless of their social condition. Aligned with this truth that emerges within the life project, there is also the need to evaluate affinities and incompatibilities with the individual's profile, reaffirming the discourse that emphasizes the need for evaluation and self-assessment to succeed in the competition for a place in the world of work.

Continuing with the analysis, there is a regularity in the discourses found in educational materials, characterized by three main aspects: the description of the current job market, the identification of emerging professions, and the presentation of activities aimed at professional life development.

Drawing on the concepts of 'management' and 'entrepreneurship,' it is possible to observe in the LDPV02 collection, specifically in the unit "*Me in the World of Work*," a delineation of the discourse that associates individual formation with the process of business creation. The positioning of the subject emphasizes that effective education requires training to maximize personal capital, prompting reflections on the role of financial education.

From this perspective, the work titles the chapter "Financial Education: Citizen Autonomy," asserting the understanding that being financially educated, that is, managing one's capital, leads to autonomy and, consequently, protagonism. In the material, the enunciating subject divides the public in our country into two profiles: spenders and savers, both requiring budgeting to observe where they are allocating or wasting their money (Alchorne; Oliveira, 2020, our translation). Considering this planning, it is emphasized that "[...] financial health is

having control over money so that one can achieve short, medium, and long-term material dreams" (Alchorne; Oliveira, 2020, p. 185, our translation). In this excerpt, we note a psychologization in the use of the term 'health', suggesting that anything deviating from proper money use is ailing, and planning and budgets are the means to 'cure' this ailment. Similarly, deadlines appear as a way to endorse the idea of the individual as a business through goal setting.

In the *LDPV04* manual, an exercise stands out with the following statement: "According to the report, what are the competencies that the market is currently seeking in young people?" (Cericato, 2020, p. 111, our translation). The question directs the youth to consider market demands, encouraging reflection on their competencies. The discourse enveloped by neoliberal governmentality suggests a new mode of governance where individuals govern themselves, implying knowledge about oneself and what is required. Thus, "[...] the new forms of capitalist exploitation seek their immanence by capturing people's ways of life, that is, modulating their control within processes" (Araújo, 2023, p. 4, our translation). In this statement, although we cannot precisely define what is meant by 'market', we see that notions of competitiveness, employability, skills, and performance are integral to this rhetoric.

In this sense, not only the aforementioned terms, but primarily socio-emotional competencies, are related to the labor market, as they lead to the performance expected of these individuals after graduation. According to Estormovski (2023), capitalism denotes a symbolic association between consumption and emotions, making it impossible to dissociate the two themes. Therefore, the process of subjectivization stems from understanding financial education and emotional management. Within this enunciative web, the textbook asserts: "Why are socio-emotional competencies more valued by the current job market than technical competencies?" (Cericato, 2020, p. 111, our translation).

Returning to the statement, it is relevant to emphasize that the assertion that socio-emotional competencies are more valued than technical competencies is not subject to doubt; on the contrary, it establishes itself as a truth. This statement prompts reflection on the reasons for this valuation, rooted in neoliberal governmentality, a new logic of the world.

From this perspective, we understand that socio-emotional competencies "[...] seek to develop students as self-enterprising, resilient, and emotionally well-adjusted individuals" (Araújo, 2023, p. 13, our translation). Thus, we understand that the development of these skills also constitutes a governance strategy aimed at meeting market demands. Therefore, the notion of protagonism, derived from the interaction between the individual, others, and the job market,



configures strategies of bioregulation designed to guide the conduct of these young individuals towards self-governance, where they perceive themselves as the main agents responsible for the success of their life projects. This guidance of conduct is supported by a set of strategies ranging from personal entrepreneurship development, discussions on sexuality, financial education, and job market dynamics to interventions in the external world. Hence, the individual is individualized, albeit influenced by various social relationships.

### **Final considerations**

Although discussions proposing reforms for youth and high school education are not recent, the debate about this stage of education has regained prominence with Provisional Measure 746, dated September 22, 2016, which emerged in a post-impeachment context. The hasty and authoritarian manner in which the reform was introduced and later approved as Law No. 13,415/17 indicates a project to dismantle education, aiming to weaken state actions in favor of a privatization and corporatization movement in schools. In this context, curricular adjustments that prioritize certain areas of knowledge, the promotion of youth protagonism, the implementation of the Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC), and the inclusion of life projects as a central component in curricula are governmental strategies reflecting a neoliberal logic that has subtly permeated school environments.

From this perspective, the aim was to analyze how youth protagonism constitutes itself as a strategy of neoliberal governmentality in discourses present in life project educational collections of the new high school. Through the analyses, it is essential to highlight that historically, high school has been a stage for different transformations, as youth are seen as having the potential to fulfill the reforms proposed over the years. Thus, there is a regulation of the conduct of these young people aimed at achieving the ends to which education is subjected. From this viewpoint, we observe a steep growth regarding the need for young people to become protagonists within and beyond the school environment, that is, in the job market. These discourses emerge in a historical and political context where education serves as a means to meet market needs. This means that the neoliberal rationality that individualizes individuals, making them flexible, autonomous, and profitable, must shape educational projects.

As a result, manuals are dedicated to explaining future professions and those in decline, mapping the current job market. This aims to prepare young people to respond to new demands, which require skills such as innovation, creativity, and autonomy. The assessment of the job

market highlights the unequal competition that high school youth need to face to secure their space, especially when resources to become a 3D printing designer or a biochemist specialized in nanotechnology are not accessible to everyone. This scenario was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many students could not attend classes due to lack of a cellphone or internet access. Therefore, we perceive that the meritocratic discourse ignores the social inequalities that inevitably impact the realization of life projects for these individuals.

Similarly, manuals present socio-emotional competencies as a principle for entering the workforce. That is, they reintroduce the concept of self-enterprise and self-profitability, as the prevailing truth is that the individual who controls their emotions for the benefit of the company and productivity is the successful subject. In this vein, there is an enunciative web that subjectivizes these students, starting from self-reflection, understanding social relationships for their personal development, and the need to develop these competencies for work.

In light of the above, the study allows for the analysis of discourse on youth protagonism as a strategy of body bioregulation, aimed at meeting market demands. The construction of the subject as a protagonist operates through relationships of knowledge and power, evidenced in their encounter with themselves, others, and the job market. Furthermore, the influence of neoliberalism on educational practices is visible, reflected in guiding documents, curricula, and educational materials, which seek to adapt to the new global logic where the individual is individualized and encouraged to behave like a business, aiming to profitize all aspects of their life.

In this context, it is evident that public schools, especially high schools, have been the scene of ongoing reforms that, far from addressing their deficiencies, have exacerbated social inequalities and diminished the state's responsibility in guaranteeing rights. It is important to note that the study is limited to the analysis of textbooks, without adequately exploring how these materials are effectively used in the day-to-day classroom. For this reason, there is an argument for the need for additional research that can provide a more precise view of the reality experienced in the practical context.

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