

**THEORETICAL-POLITICAL INTERPRETATION OF UNIVERSITY  
DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF NEOLIBERAL  
POLICIES**

**INTERPRETAÇÃO TEÓRICO-POLÍTICA DA GESTÃO DEMOCRÁTICA  
UNIVERSITÁRIA NO CONTEXTO DAS POLÍTICAS NEOLIBERAIS**

**INTERPRETACIÓN TEÓRICO-POLÍTICA DE LA GESTIÓN DEMOCRÁTICA  
UNIVERSITARIA EN EL CONTEXTO DE LAS POLÍTICAS NEOLIBERALES**

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**ABSTRACT:** The article analyzes the university democratic management from a theoretical-political reflection on the contradictions of the capitalist State as an instance of domination and bourgeois power in the context of neoliberal policies. The theoretical reference is Florestan Fernandes' conception of democracy and bourgeois- autocracy in countries with dependent and underdeveloped capitalism. The procedures are a theoretical study based on references to the concepts of democracy, education management, university autonomy and neoliberal policies. The limitation of the constitutional principle of university autonomy resulted in a restriction of democratic management by the managerial model and by the neoliberal project.

**KEYWORDS:** Democratic management. University autonomy. Neoliberalism.

**RESUMO:** O artigo analisa a gestão democrática universitária a partir de uma reflexão teórico-política das contradições do Estado capitalista como instância de dominação e poder burguês no contexto das políticas neoliberais. O referencial teórico é a concepção de Florestan Fernandes de democracia e autocracia-burguesa em países de capitalismo dependente e subdesenvolvido. Os procedimentos são um estudo teórico que faz referências aos conceitos de democracia, gestão da educação, autonomia universitária e as políticas neoliberais. A limitação do princípio constitucional de autonomia universitária produziu uma restrição da gestão democrática pelo modelo de gestão gerencial e pelo projeto neoliberal.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Gestão democrática. Autonomia universitária. Neoliberalismo.

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**RESUMEN:** *El artículo analiza la gestión democrática universitaria desde una reflexión teórico-política de las contradicciones del Estado capitalista como instancia de dominación y poder burgués en el contexto de las políticas neoliberales. El referencial teórico es la concepción de Florestan Fernandes de la democracia y la autocracia burguesa en países con capitalismo dependiente y subdesarrollado. Los procedimientos son un estudio teórico que tiene como referencia los conceptos de democracia, gestión educativa, autonomía universitaria y políticas neoliberales. La limitación del principio constitucional de autonomía universitaria produjo una restricción a la gestión democrática por el modelo de gestión gerencial y por el proyecto neoliberal.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Gestión democrática. Autonomía universitaria. Neoliberalismo.*

## Introduction

The university democratic management needs to be analyzed from the history of educational institutions that are marked by the historical and political characteristics of Brazilian society and by the specificities of peripheral capitalism (FERNANDES, 1976). The Brazilian context that developed after the 1980s with the end of the civil-military dictatorship and the redemocratization movement triggered the promulgation of the Federal Constitution of 1988 and ensured in article 206 the democratic management of public education as a fundamental principle in Brazilian education. However, the democracy that is concretely established is historically rooted in a bourgeois democracy, currently neoliberal in nature, supported by ultraliberalism, whenever convenient.

The state crisis established from the 1970s onwards resulted from the fall in the rate of profit, the saturation of the Taylor-Fordist production model within the scope of capital reproduction and workers' strikes, which resulted in the crisis of the welfare state in face of the demands of capitalism (ANTUNES, 2005). This crisis implied a process of reorganizing the political and ideological system and reorganizing the process of reproduction of capital with the dispute between neoliberal and social-democratic projects. According to Dagnino (2002), a tension is established in the democratic advance as the political dispute between different political projects requires an active and participative civil society. In this scenario, the struggle permeates disputes over narratives and meanings around opposing interests and projects of society, especially around the role of the State in economic and social development.

The country's political redemocratization actually resulted in an ambiguous legal field, as disputes between different segments and social classes culminated in utopian and

fictional democratic projects of democratic management. The Federal Constitution of 1988 recognized the rights of citizenship, but anomalously, it did not actually contribute to the construction of a truly democratic society, as rights are substantially affected by neoliberal hegemony, in line with the historical trend of the constitution of an autocratic bourgeois democracy (FERNANDES, 1976).

The university democratic management suffers from interference resulting from historical determinations and autocratic policies and results in ambiguous or merely formal practices, whose tendency is to democratic practice as a mediation or technical instrument for conflict resolution and not the creation of effective spaces for collective participation.

This article aims to reflect on aspects of university democratic management from a theoretical and political reflection, considering the neoliberal situation as political and cultural hegemony and highlighting the main evidences that limit university institutions from enjoying full democratic precepts as foundations constitutional.

The article is divided into two parts, the first presents an analysis of the bourgeois democracy in Florestan Fernandes to serve as a theoretical basis for understanding the abstract concept of democracy that does not consider the reality of peripheral capitalism and the role that the State plays in domination and in bourgeois power. The second analyzes the trajectory of university management within the scope of neoliberal democracy, initiated and put into practice in the political experiences of the 1990s after the process of political redemocratization and which has, in a contradictory way, broadened the horizons of university autonomy while it has limited democracy itself through educational reforms.

Finally, there is a process of resurgence of the neoliberal project through a “bourgeois-autocracy” that can be considered as ultraliberal and promotes an intensification of neoliberal policies in public policies and which exposes the sui generis autocratic characteristic of Brazilian society.

### **Bourgeois democracy in Florestan Fernandes**

The sociological interpretation of Florestan Fernandes (a poorly researched and referenced thinker in education) about the national bourgeoisie in a peripheral country, of a “dependent and underdeveloped capitalist economy”, allowed the elaboration of a concept of “bourgeois democracy”, indispensable to reflect on university management and the conjuncture of neoliberal reform of the State and of education in Brazil. Thus, even considering the different historical moments between the analysis of Florestan Fernandes

and the current situation and the limitations of theoretical interpretations, it is possible to make some analyzes about the reality of education and democracy.

According to Fernandes (1976), democratic radicalism, a classic model of bourgeois revolution, produced a “bourgeois-democratic” model that took effect in the central countries, but is not configured as a model in the peripheral countries of capitalism, nor does it develop in the same direction as the countries that is, there is no universal process of development that must be followed until reaching the most evolved level of central capitalism. On the periphery of capitalism there is a dissociation between capitalist development and democracy and a rational association with autocracy. According to Fernandes, capitalism associated with and dependent on central (imperialist) capitalism is a “wild and difficult” capitalism similar to the model of fascism that evokes the autocratic-bourgeois model,

Which suggests that the Bourgeois Revolution in the periphery is, par excellence, an essentially political phenomenon, of creation, consolidation and preservation of predominantly political power structures, subject to the control of the bourgeoisie or controllable by it under any circumstances (FERNANDES, 1976, p. 294, our translation).

The bourgeois revolution as an essentially political phenomenon implies a predominantly political relationship with the State and with capitalist development articulated with State policies. Hence, the objective of the bourgeoisie is to maintain order and save peripheral capitalism, in other words, “prevent bourgeois domination and bourgeois control over the national state from deteriorating” (FERNANDES, 1976, p. 294, our translation).

Fernandes (1976) always mentions in the aspects of the bourgeois revolution the terms: “backward” or “latecomer” of world capitalism, and as it is a peripherally dependent nation, the political class actions are deeply reactionary, revealing its autocratic essence, a “dictatorship of class” or “preventive class dictatorship”. As it is in a condition of dependence and underdevelopment, the bourgeoisie does not have much rational choice in alternatives to maintaining its interests and its existence on the periphery, which implies a lack of commitment to the foundations of bourgeois idealism: radical liberalism and bourgeois-democratic nationalism. The autocratic bourgeoisie possesses economic, social and political power realized and maintained by the “control of the State machinery”, that is, a reactionary and essentially political bourgeois revolution.

The bourgeoisie on the periphery does not need and cannot commit to the radical

democracy of classic bourgeois revolutions, and the more it identifies with the autocracy the more it makes the State the field of defense of its interests and privileges, making it inflexible in the use of institutionalized violence. Thus, bourgeois domination is not just a socioeconomic force, but a political force, a political network of defense and repression, of bourgeois power linked to the state enterprise, as a source of “legitimate bourgeois power”.

As the control of "economic backwardness" does not effectively imply the suppression of dependence and underdevelopment, it establishes the consolidation of the bourgeois mode of domination at the political level, in a coercive and legitimate way, and constitutes a special variant of domination, the variant possible in peripheral capitalism, it even uses the State as a repression of attempts to oppose bourgeois conceptions and their “legal order”.

On the strength of the expression “violence”, Fernandes (1976, p. 303, our translation) makes an observation:

In his investigations, the sociologist cannot help but waver at the results of his observations and interpretations! It seems incredible that such a kind of systematic oppression can exist today; and, even more, that it and the terrible mechanisms of repression it needs to resort to, can be reconciled with the egalitarian ideals, of respect for the human person, for the fundamental rights of man and for the democratic style of life. However, it is there – and not just in Brazilian society (FERNANDES, 1976, p. 303, our translation).

Bourgeois modernity is, according to Florestan Fernandes, defined as the oppression machine of the “institutionalized class” that creates “a capitalism that associates luxury, power and wealth, on the one hand, with extreme poverty, opprobrium and oppression, on the other” (FERNANDES, 1976, p. 304). The promotion of the common interests of the bourgeoisie and national and international bourgeois fractions is articulated around the defense of private property and private initiative, promoted with the control of state political power. The divergences between classes and bourgeois fractions are resolved with mutual concessions and adjustment policies, acquiring a conservative and reactionary content, sometimes “profoundly reactionary” (FERNANDES, 1976). As a result, the bourgeoisie's way of being and operating in peripheral capitalism creates some concrete consequences that from the point of view of economic development generate a permanent situation of underdevelopment, while in social life a structural daily reality marked by generalized social inequality, misery and poverty, culminating in the alienation and political marginalization of the popular classes.

The double articulation [internal unequal development and external imperialist domination] makes various pre- or sub-capitalist economic development focuses to maintain, indefinitely, archaic or semi-archaic socio-economic and political structures operating as an impediment to agrarian reform, to the valorization of work, to the proletarianization of the worker, to the expansion of the internal market etc. It also makes speculation take place in a context that is almost colonial rather than purely capitalist, in all spheres of economic life (although with a predominance of the industrial and financial sector; and of urban-industrial capitalism over agrarian capitalism). It also prevents effectively modern or modernized economic structures from being exposed to efficient societal control, allowing the industrial boom to remain largely subject to the old model of economic cycles, so destructive to the organic development of an integrated capitalist economy on a national scale. The absence of this efficient societal control also confers almost total freedom to “large companies”, national or foreign, in all branches of business, and to the devastating imperialist penetration in all the intricacies of Brazilian economic life (FERNANDES, 1976, p. 306, our translation).

Bourgeois domination converges to the core of decision-making power, within the scope of the State and its political-administrative structures, military participation, which conducts the policy of legitimate violence during the process of maintaining bourgeois power and seeks to overcome classic bourgeois impotence, its fragility in the classic form of bourgeois democracy. Thus, political domination in the State is fundamental since, in dependent and underdeveloped capitalism, social conflicts cannot be resolved privately in civil society nor in a conventional, democratic-bourgeois way, by the State.

The fundamental characteristic of the State in the periphery is its autocratic nature, founded on the authoritarian nature of presidentialism and on military participation in the conduct of bourgeois domination, that is, the bourgeois autocracy has a contradictory relationship with the historical movement of the classic “bourgeois-democratic” model, breaking with the ideologies and utopias of the bourgeois democratic republics.

As the absolute break with the classic model is not possible as a bourgeois rationality, it ends up producing republican illusions and attraction of the masses. In reality, the peripheral bourgeoisie has never produced a historical process of democratic conquest, since the autocratic structural situation is its nature. The autocratic bourgeoisie, however, appropriates radical bourgeois idealism, nationalism, democracy etc. and characterizes it as a “populist demagoguery” and with a “directed modernization”, adapting to certain abstract causes such as “democracy” and “Christian civilization” under rigid or violent State control, in a process of specifically authoritarian and totalitarian bourgeois domination, characterized in historical moments of political opening, as a preventive class dictatorship.



The radical utopias of the democratic bourgeoisie “could be confused with subversion and communism” (FERNANDES, 1976, p. 330, our translation) so that the social discussion that moves to the scope of the masses makes no sense, that is, the question of democracy in autocracy is a problem of a bourgeois order, but in reality, it becomes universal and poses as a problem of a democratic order.

From this angle, those pressures placed the bourgeois classes and class strata not facing the *problem of democracy* (even understood as a bourgeois democracy); but in face of the *problem of order* (understand: of a “bourgeois order” that should be saved, put on stable and consolidated bases) (FERNANDES, 1976, p. 333, our translation).

The main issue of democracy is understood as the maintenance of order or the democratic “appearance of order”. Thus, autocracy is a problem of maintaining bourgeois domination, of a “strong democracy”, in the most hostile sense as self-assertion and self-privilege, of deep and persistent military and technocratic impregnation. According to Florestan Fernandes, there is no weak bourgeois democracy, but a “disguised bourgeois-autocracy”, installed in the State as a “bureaucratic bourgeoisie”, whose objective is the maintenance of bourgeois order. According to Fernandes (1976, p. 342, our translation): “without intensive and persistent militarization and technocratization, it would be impossible to place the national state at the center of historical transformations”.

The military and technocratic elements of the State seek to assume functions to guarantee the bourgeois order (or bourgeois democracy) and to modernize and rationalize the political articulation for the dominance of the bourgeois class, universalizing the State as the nation's business. The structuring of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the functions of the State created political control over the economy, and it is not merely a political-military State, but also a juridical-political one, in which “bourgeois autocracy places its ideal of State in historical connection with fascism and Nazism” (FERNANDES, 1976, p. 345, our translation).

In this way, the bourgeois modernization of the State is based on state interventionism, the political control of the State through private initiative and the regulation of the bourgeoisie and its strata, in articulation with the international and imperialist bourgeoisie, in a “state-led capitalism”.

Here, therefore, it is evident that the bourgeois consensus reconciles the “Brazilian tradition”, of *restricted democracy* – democracy among equals,

that is, among the powerful, who dominate and represent civil society – with the “modernizing orientation” of *strong Government*. The legal and political order remains open, democratic and universal, preserving the values that enshrine the rule of law; and this State is historically characterized, in turn, insofar as all this is necessary for the monopolization of real power, authority and control of the sources of legitimacy by the bourgeois classes and their elites (FERNANDES, 1976, p. 347, our translation).

Brazilian democracy has characteristic features of the historical condition of peripheral capitalism and has produced a State bourgeoisie that not only limits the full development of democracy and politics, but has also impeded the economic-social development of society.

### **Liberal democratic university management**

Universities define their academic, scientific, technological and formative purposes based on the principles of university autonomy and democratic management of education, presented in the Federal Constitution of 1988. Despite democratic advances in the field of education with the Federal Constitution, recognized as a citizen constitution, which establishes the Democratic Rule of Law, access and permanence to university education are presented as a fragile right. The university is increasingly conditioned by the economic and political demands of the private sector that make it difficult in practice to implement public-state education.

According to Bianchetti and Sguissardi (2017), the idea of a university in Brazil originated in the period of Imperial Brazil but began to materialize after the Revolution of Thirty (1930), marked by several phases of development and restructuring in which the model of university was pressed. The structure of the university is governed by Law n. 5540 of 1968 that established the structural, political and pedagogical nature of the higher education system and created alternative institutional structure with the university format in the form of autarchy, subordinated to the university council, governed by statute and chaired by the rector. It is from the university reform arising from a non-democratic civil-military dictatorship that the university is defined by its didactic and scientific, administrative, financial and patrimonial autonomy. Didactic autonomy is understood as the freedom to establish the objectives and organization of the didactic and school system and to create courses, programs, curricula without any doctrinal or political restrictions; administrative autonomy consists of the possibility for the university, with the approval of the Federal or



State Council of Education, to reform and change statutes, regulations and appoint deans for approval by the government through a triple list, and to create its decision-making bodies, among others; and, finally, financial and patrimonial autonomy, which deals with the administration of assets and the execution of university policies, especially the budget and to provide for donations and inheritances, etc.

The university reform of the civil-military dictatorship of 28 November 1968 represents a democratic dissimulation, therefore, it is established in a contradictory way, since at the same time the government institutes university autonomy, it establishes the creation of mechanisms to intimidate autonomy by legal and political acts such as the Institutional Act (AI-5), of 13 December 1968 and Decree Law n. 477 of 16 February 1969 (FAVERO, 1988). Thus, the university is structured in an authoritarian and totalitarian political and ideological order, aligned with the governments of the civil-military dictatorship and the developmental ideology that served as parameters for educational reforms in line with the MEC-USAID agreement. Thus, the set of decrees, resolutions and opinions issued by different public bodies of the period were intended to legitimize a technical orientation to increase the efficiency and productivity of the state apparatus and at the same time limit aspects inherent to democracy and citizenship such as the extinction of individual, political and expression freedoms. In this context, the expansion of private sector participation in university education was largely facilitated based on the logic of rationality and efficiency of the productive sectors, under the yoke of the Human Capital ideology of Theodore W. Schultz and Gary S. Becker, justified as universalizing measures to serve the national territory.

Law no. 5540 of 1968 reflects the demands of systemic formation in accordance with the processes of conservative modernization through authoritarian measures aimed at creating the conditions for the normalization of activities essential to universities. The intention is to introduce into state planning the planning of the higher education system, according to a modernizing logic of a privatist-enterprise character.

The new forces in power, with the 1964 coup d'état, would not promote a radical change in the modernizing trends in higher education that had been marking higher education policy during the National-reformist governments. As Martins (1988, p.13) observes, what changed was the historical sense that determined the ends of this modernization. Once populism is liquidated, its link with the developmentalism of a certain "autonomous" capitalism with a "nationalist color" would be lost. Now, modernized higher education would be another instrument to contribute to the consolidation of the "associated and dependent" development project of the hegemonic centers of international capitalism. The "rationalization and efficiency" defended at the end of the previous regime and, then, by several

consultancies, commissions and working groups (Atcon reports, Eapes/MEC-Usaid and University Reform WG), in addition to Decrees no. 53/66 and 252/67, would constitute the essential concept of Law no. 5.540/68 and help to provide the security of the new growth model (SGUISSARDI, 2004, p. 39, our translation).

During the 1980s, as a result of the political struggle for participation in the course of national political life, various movements and democratic experiences that favored the country's political redemocratization process were created. In the educational field, the promulgation of the Federal Constitution of 1988 represented a great advance in presenting the democratic management of public education as a principle of national education. The constitution represents an unprecedented advance and promotes a break with the exclusion of the masses from political participation. In fundamental rights, for example, article 10 establishes the participation of workers and employees in collegiate bodies of the public sphere and article 65 ensures that the interests of workers and employees are objects of discussion and deliberation in the collegiate bodies of public agencies. In other words, they are constitutional foundations and guidelines that comprise the Democratic Rule of Law, a public-state entity, which means the guarantee of instruments and mediations to meet the public needs of the population with the democratic participation of this same population, that is, formation and the institution of the condition of citizenship and of a citizen State.

Thus, the principle of democratic management must guide the legal and institutional guidelines in the public-state sector. As a result, the Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education (LDB) n. 9394, of 1996, in effect and subsidized by the Federal Constitution of 1988, states in article I that the management of education must occur with the participation of education professionals in the preparation of the pedagogical project and in article II, that the participation of the school community must occur in councils and equivalents. Although the new legal system presents, in a very significant way, the meanings of the struggles for democratic freedoms, such as the conquest of freedom of party organization, the return of elections for governors that culminated in the “Diretas Já” movement, and the need for construction of experiences and democratic management processes in the public-state sector, the principle is stunted by the situation of neoliberal ideology in the country, which began as a dominant culture in the 1990s. According to Cury:

The Constitution of the Republic of 1988 was enacted at a time when the intense winds from England, the United States, Australia and Chile were blowing in the opposite direction to the social rights so clearly proclaimed. The postulation of a retreat in the role of the State in these rights and in the

economy ended up confirming the non-fulfilment of many of the expectations (CURY, 2013, p. 205, our translation).

The Federal Constitution of 1988, which opened the doors for the insertion of the principles of democracy and citizenship as foundations of a modern society, in order to overcome the dictatorial forms of organization of society, also opened the doors for the insertion and maintenance of a neoliberal bourgeois democratic perspective in the scope of the State and society, creating since the 1980s an orientation or culture conducive to the consolidation of neoliberalism as of the 1990s, in projects and programs of neoliberal reforms.

Despite the constitutional advance in terms of achievements in the field of democracy and citizenship, democratic management impacted universities that developed a democratic culture with the participation of public servants and the right to conceive, plan, deliberate, monitor and evaluate actions. However, the constitutional guarantee of democratic management in the public sector is not fully effective as democracy in universities is limited by the denial of the full exercise of autonomy, when it is not allowed, for example, to discuss the social purpose of education that is pre-established by a neoliberal ideal and the immediate alignment of education to the market. These ambiguities extend to the level of public policies that seek to withdraw or hinder democratic management in the public sector, as management of neoliberal ideas is considered an objective factor.

The neoliberal experiences of the 1980s and 1990s were produced in the context of democratic experiences or democratic opening processes in dictatorial or authoritarian countries such as Chile in Latin America, which served as a laboratory of neoliberal experiences in the late 1970s. There is a clear and direct relationship between neoliberal policies and violent and authoritarian postures, whether in dictatorial regimes or in bourgeois democracies. The neoliberal processes to improve the university based on democratic principles developed with the political, economic and social tensions of the 1990s and presented, on the one hand, a more radical perspective, of violence, from more extreme to moderate cases, on the other hand, in a pseudo-democratic or bourgeois-democratic perspective, concretely non-democratic, as it involves limiting and withdrawing rights and restricting participation in the face of inexorably unpopular neoliberal policies. According to Sguissardi (2014, p. 92, our translation), the political project at the global level “is very well demarcated by a world economy and by the replacement of the Welfare State or, in the Brazilian case, the National Development State in crisis, by the so-called neoliberalism”.

Neoliberal ideas emerged in the 1940s and fought against state interventionism and

Welfare-State policies. From the 70s onwards, the first experiences with Donald Reagan, in the United States, and Margareth Thatcher, in England, appear. Despite the specificities of each country, in general terms, neoliberal governments limit the size of the state to a minimum, avoid unnecessary regulations, promote privatization of state-owned companies, open up the national economy and encourage free market competitiveness. Furthermore, neoliberal policies favor the world economy in its financially predominant face, as they impose an environment that allows the development of capital in its volatility (PAULANI, 2008). But, at the same time, it is a neoliberalism that needs a strong State in terms of investment and public policies for private initiative and for the maintenance of capitalist conditions, continuing the precepts of State capitalism or bourgeois capitalism.

Dardot and Laval (2016) analyze neoliberalism as a global political rationality that imposes on society and on State the logic of capital and creates a new subjectivity in people. It adds that the neoliberal consensus has radically expanded and diluted the critical reflections on neoliberalism, which in turn feeds on the ideological narrative of the economic and social crises it produces. Thus, neoliberalism proposes not only the reform of the State, but the colonization of subjects with a subjectivity that is based on chaotic rationality. As highlighted by Paulani (2008), neoliberalism develops in a context of permanent crisis, centralization of capital, mergers, acquisitions and deregulation and concentration in the production of monopoly and publicly traded sectors. The neoliberal project assumes itself as the only way to solve the problem of the economic crisis of the 1980s.

During the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994-2002), a bold plan for the reform of the State was implemented, subsidized by the Master Plan for the Reform of the State Apparatus of 1995, prepared by the Ministry of Federal Administration and State Reform (MARE), led by Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira, based on the neoliberal doctrine and the managerial public administration model.

State reform involves four problems that, although interdependent, can be distinguished: (a) an economic-political problem - the delimitation of the size of the State; (b) another also economic-political, but that deserves special treatment - the redefinition of the regulatory role of the State; (c) an economic-administrative one - the recovery of governance or financial and administrative capacity to implement the political decisions taken by the government; and (d) a political one - the increase in the governability or political capacity of the government to broker interests, ensure legitimacy, and govern. In delimiting the size of the State, the ideas of privatization, publicity and outsourcing are involved. The issue of deregulation concerns the greater or lesser degree of State intervention in the functioning of the market. There is a financial aspect to increasing governance: overcoming the fiscal crisis; a strategic one: the redefinition of the forms of intervention

in the economic-social plan; and an administrative one: overcoming the bureaucratic way of administering the State. The increase in governability includes two aspects: the government's legitimacy before society, and the adequacy of political institutions to mediate interests (BRESSER-PEREIRA, 1997, p. 8, our translation)

Bresser-Pereira (1997) emphasizes that the objective of the State reform is the reconstruction of the State, this means that it is not just about overcoming bureaucratic management through managerial management, but also the refoundation of institutional structures of the State, adequate and adjusted to the private interests of civil society, which, contrary to what is imagined, is still a return to the patrimonialist State, which still does not cease to be or represent a specific form of State intervention in the economy. Bresser-Pereira, in some texts, always seeks to assert that the management reform proposed as a replacement for bureaucratic management is not a neoliberal policy in radical terms, in the sense of complete absence or intervention in the economy, which presupposes and confirms that the (strong) State continues to play a central role in the consolidation of capitalism. This way of presenting the problem aims to assert the independence, autonomy and objectivity of managerialism as a rational administration, ensuring efficiency in public management, but it is an attempt to disguise the authoritarian and violent posture of neoliberalism by imposing itself on the State and redefine (reform) its institutions and public policies.

The management model is inspired by business administration, despite claims that treat it as an objective science, and it has properly become a scientific model of public administration, with an emphasis on productivity, results and interaction of private agents and/or organizations of civil society with the public sector. The State moves from the role of direct provider of social services and promotes management contracts with representatives of civil society. According to Araújo and Castro (2011), the management reform of the State is created in a scenario of “dissemination of the idea that the private sector is more efficient than the public sector, therefore, its organizational guidelines must be applied in the public sector in a way to rationalize services and reduce public spending” (ARAÚJO; CASTRO, 2011, our translation).

The concept of education in a managerial State is defined (as if it were not already), as a competitive activity and not exclusive to the State, but whose consequence is to modify the current model of university, which in the new concept would be administered by public foundations of private law, through management contracts and proposal of the end of free education. Furthermore, such a model “would release the State from the constitutional duty of integral maintenance of institutions and would make them responsible for the permanent

search for resources for their own maintenance, with official funding bodies or the market” (SGUISSARDI, 2014, p. 92, our translation).

The set of elements that contribute to the redefinition of the university's social purpose in the neoliberal project is affected by the privatist-business logic. University autonomy is restricted insofar as it tends to adjust to external purposes, of private interest, established and articulated by public policies, strictly aligned with the market. As a consequence of directing the university more directly to satisfy the demands of the market, it generates damage to the constitutional principles of the university, especially university democracy. Thus, in general terms, the governments after the process of political redemocratization, especially the FHC government, under the aegis of the neoliberal situation and ideology and the reform policies of the Brazilian State, started in a prominent way, structural attacks on autonomy and the management of university education.

There are a series of policies aimed at the indiscriminate opening of courses and private institutions, without due concern and quality measurement, that is, without a mechanism for regulation, management and evaluation of the formative and qualitative aspects of formation, courses and institutions and without concern with the faculty, their career and professional development. Policies to streamline formation, in the form of mass education, are expanded with the strengthening of distance education and the creation of teaching institutions (teaching degrees) that exclude the teaching-research-extension triad. Such policies culminated in Ordinance n. 2.117, of 6 December 2019, which authorizes institutions to offer 40% of the workload as distance courses. In the same direction, there is a process to encourage professional training or professional education, that is, directly involved with market demands, needs or ideologies, from an economic perspective of higher education, from technological or higher technology courses. This also outlines the perspective of teacher education based on an individualizing, subjectivist and professionalizing perspective, in accordance with the infamous pedagogy of competences. Thus, the national education councils themselves are without the proper participation of specialists or the school community establishing private-business policies in public education (Resolution CNE/CP 2/2019, Resolution CNE/CP 1/22020).

Contrary to what is established by the constitutional principle and the higher education law, autonomy tends to be restricted to mere formality or a conceptual change, such as external fundraising, establishing a vision of institutional differentiation and diversification of funding sources, even in accordance with the theses of the multilateral organizations, like the minimal State, a minimum education. These changes seek to reduce the policy and



management of education to procedures, processes and execution of government policies that emphasize the approach of the government to economic and business groups, mediated by educational policies, in which education is understood as directly linked to interests economic and the labor market.

Therefore, the Federal Constitution and the LDB itself are based on a historical democratic situation, post-civil-military dictatorship, but on a bourgeois conception of democracy, appropriated by the neoliberal ideology, which ensures the minimalist reform of the State. Thus, they present formal consonance with democratic values: public school, autonomy, participation, plurality, democratic management, among others, but hostage to effective neoliberal public policies that lead to the emptying of such concepts and practices.

It should be noted that with a managerial perspective of education management, which is the supposedly objective basis of the ideological policy of neoliberalism, processes are enacted that limit the progressive aspects of the Federal Constitution and the LDB, and that distort them, for example, with diversification of investment sources, with the inauguration of a national metric system of evaluation, of standardized forms of evaluation of education based on goals and procedures based on merit, competences, productivity, including, serving as evaluation of school and teaching performance.

From 2003, during the PT governments, despite the expectations and undeniable advances in the field of education, there was a certain continuity in the general links of rationality in neoliberal policies, which also produced the limitation of university autonomy and the continuity of managerial reforms of education. Thus, the logic of the market in the field of education and the conception and management and public-private management at the university remained, giving some maintenance and continuity to the neoliberal project of the previous government belonging to the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB).

What is most evident in this “progressive” period is the economistic concept that understands the issue of university funding as articulated with the diversification of investment sources, that is, with the search for funding alternatives, therefore, meeting public-private partnership policies, and other ways to promote private or business resources or even pension funds to foster the university. The new fundraising strategies accentuate a privatist view of university autonomy, following the guidelines of the State's managerial reform.

Thus, the vision of education management is also restricted to parameters based on goals, indicators and productivity, the goals are now the results and no longer education, degenerating or resignifying concepts such as participation and democracy and, consequently, the public social function of the university. Autonomy as a stone constitutional principle is

broken with the astuteness of its limitation by resignification and, in the same way, the management of education is no longer understood in a broad way, but as a resource or management process.

Despite the recognition of democratic principles in the Federal Constitution and in the LDB supported by a progressive perspective of citizenship and democracy, public policies for education behave as supports to the logic of the various political projects of the situation, making proposals and educational projects authoritarian not only in relation to the neoliberal content of the project that deregulates historically conquered rights, but as a deliberation at the top without due participatory support or in the legislative and executive sphere, without the participation of schools, Universities and Federal Institutes, education entities and associations, in short, of the community.

The Bolsonaro government (2019-2022) was elected by the Liberal Social Party – PSL after a campaign marked by the absence of debates between candidates and the massive and manipulative use of social networks. In its party ideology, the PSL establishes as ideas the fight against corruption, moral and social imbalances and policies that aim to “raise awareness” of the evils caused by communism and socialism, among others. Particularly, among its ideals, the protection of private property and the reduction of the State's size stand out, as well as the incentive to all forms of free private initiative, through the adoption of liberal economic policies.

In the first years of government, as an example of autocratic policies more directly related to the field of education, among many others, it presented the Entrepreneurial and Innovative Institutes and Universities Program, called the *Future-se* Project, which had four versions, the last sent to Congress as PL 3076/2020, establishes the concept of education and university. *Future-se* is the idealization of a higher education project that aims to strategically articulate education and the market, according to Baima (2019) transforming the legal personality of federal higher education institutions, which is transformed into public institutions under private law. It represents the most profound attack on the public-state character of universities and directly represents the autocratic perspective on education.

The analyzes carried out by intellectuals and representatives of associations, such as the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education (ANPED), the National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education (ANDIFES), the National Council of Federal Network Institutions of Professional, Scientific and Technological Education (CONIF), among others, on the content of the program and the way it was presented represents one of the biggest attacks on the public university. The *Future-se*

program was presented abruptly and consolidated without the participation of universities not even to collaborate with the preparation of the proposal. The haste, the lack of discussion, participation and the authoritarian form of presentation and imposition of a public interest program are highlighted, with an ideological and unfounded argument of crisis in the university's public financing system.

The program not only violated the principle of university autonomy provided for in the Federal Constitution but was also proposed with the aim of destroying the current model of public universities, including the Federal Institutes and the Federal Technological Education Centers. In Baima's words (2019), the *Future-se* Project would enable the alienation of the assets of these institutions, the hiring of teachers and technical staff without the need for a public contest, the encouragement of private projects and entrepreneurship, in addition to the implementation of mechanisms of awards very committed to values different from strictly academic. The author highlights the dependence of intellectual production on the possibility of commercialization, since it would be conditioned to market results. And he adds that the ultimate aim of *Future-se* is to extinguish the administrative autonomy of federal institutions, through the introduction of executive managers outside the university.

The *Future-se* program presupposes university management managed by Equity Funds, linked to the vicissitudes of volatile financial markets, representing a logic of neoliberal reforms under development in the country, which convert educational systems into market niches, in a direct association between education and market, while it tends to dismiss education as a public-state entity.

This neoliberal political orientation seeks to continue the implementation of the “Managerial State” conceived as a “modern democracy”, in which privatizations should not be conceived with pessimism, but as an indication of the need to consolidate the managerial State. In this context, there is no interest in strengthening federal universities and institutes, on the contrary, the federal government strives to scrap, precarize and disqualify from an anti-scientific ideological posture and, opportunely, operationalize the new rationality, ensuring a managerial-oriented management and with profit-generating universities, in a strictly privatist-business mold.

Linked with the Future-se Program, a project to reform university education, there are a series of projects and policies for neoliberal State reform in progress, articulated and based on the management reform of public-state institutions. Administrative reform (PEC 32/2020) represents, for example, the adoption of drastic measures by a political-ideological bias of neoliberal nature, based on managerial management and on the redefinition of the role of the

State, it would be the conclusion of the State reform initiated in the 1990s, now done with the due absence of consultation and popular participation, going over constitutional precepts.

### Final considerations

In this article, it was shown that the university democratic management cannot be explained by itself and not only as a principle, without understanding the nature of the State itself and of the historical-political processes. It is only by considering the social processes in which the reproduction of capital and the configuration of the State take place, that considerations can be made about democratic university management. With this in mind, the understanding was supported, especially, by Florestan Fernandes, based on his conception of democracy and bourgeois-autocracy in countries with dependent and underdeveloped capitalism and on the contributions of scholars in the field of university education. It is concluded that the reasons why institutions do not fully absorb the principles of democratic management are associated with the ideology of neoliberalism associated with authoritarian policies, with the objective of articulating public education and bourgeois domination.

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