

**PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS BASED ON
ROBERTO DAMATTA, PIERRE BOURDIEU AND ZYGMUNT BAUMAN**

**ENSINO SUPERIOR PRIVADO NO BRASIL: UMA ANÁLISE CRÍTICA BASEADA EM
ROBERTO DAMATTA, PIERRE BOURDIEU E ZYGMUNT BAUMAN**

**LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR PRIVADA EN BRASIL: UN ANÁLISIS CRÍTICO
BASADO EN ROBERTO DAMATTA, PIERRE BOURDIEU Y ZYGMUNT BAUMAN**



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ABSTRACT: This work aims to analyze the context of private higher education in Brazil, drawing parallels from the perspectives of anthropologist Roberto DaMatta (1997), French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1975), and Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2013). The aim is to highlight some characteristics of Brazilian culture in order to understand power disputes and inequalities in the reproductive model of education in liquid times. By reading and analyzing these authors, although they are in different contexts and times, it will be possible to point out that private higher education ends up reproducing inequalities rather than promoting social justice and effective transformations. This is why it seems inevitable and urgent to create interdisciplinary alternatives and dialogues based on socio-cultural analyses that add to the debates in the field of education.

KEYWORDS: Private higher education. Reproduction. Inequality. Hierarchization. Liquid Modernity.

RESUMO: *Esse trabalho visa analisar o contexto do ensino superior privado no Brasil, traçando paralelos sob as perspectivas do antropólogo Roberto DaMatta (1997), o sociólogo francês Pierre Bourdieu (1975) e o sociólogo polonês Zygmunt Bauman (2013). O objetivo é evidenciar algumas características da cultura brasileira de modo a compreender disputas de poder e desigualdades no modelo reprodutor do ensino em tempos líquidos. A partir da leitura e análise desses autores, embora se encontrem em contextos e épocas diferentes, será possível apontar que a educação superior privada acaba por reproduzir desigualdades ao invés de promover justiça social e transformações efetivas. Razão pela qual nos parece inevitável e urgente a criação de alternativas interdisciplinares e diálogos provindos de análises socioculturais que somem aos debates da área da educação.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Ensino superior privado. Reprodução. Desigualdade. Hierarquização. Modernidade Líquida.*

RESUMEN: *Este trabajo tiene como objetivo analizar el contexto de la educación superior privada en Brasil, trazando paralelismos a partir de las perspectivas del antropólogo Roberto DaMatta (1997), del sociólogo francés Pierre Bourdieu (1975) y del sociólogo polaco Zygmunt Bauman (2013). El objetivo es destacar algunas características de la cultura brasileña para comprender las disputas de poder y las desigualdades en el modelo reproductivo de la educación en tiempos líquidos. A través de la lectura y el análisis de estos autores, aunque se encuentren en contextos y épocas diferentes, será posible señalar que la educación superior privada termina reproduciendo desigualdades en lugar de promover la justicia social y transformaciones efectivas. Por eso, parece inevitable y urgente crear alternativas y diálogos interdisciplinarios basados en análisis socioculturales que se sumen a los debates en el campo de la educación.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Enseñanza superior privada. Reproducción. Desigualdad. Jerarquización. Modernidad líquida.*

Introduction

Focusing on the analysis of private higher education in Brazil, we start from the premise that some characteristics of Brazilian culture amplify/complexify the difficulties of overcoming socio-educational dilemmas. DaMatta (1997) raises issues and discussions that do not even seem to be part of the context of analysis in the field of education. Suppose there are evident cultural questions that emphasize hierarchy ("Do you know who you're talking to?") and put into question the discussion about inequality. According to Bourdieu (1975), there is a mechanism of reproduction responsible for maintaining the predominant logic and hindering the alteration of inherited conditions from the perspective of symbolic and economic capital. If these phenomena, upon which Bourdieu focuses, make sense for thinking about a sociology of education that questions and denounces and there is an encounter between this and the context of Brazilian private education, undoubtedly, it can contribute to a reflection on the subject, even though the focus is far from Europe.

In the same vein, the third sociologist we bring into the debate, Zygmunt Bauman (2013), made a fundamental reading for the understanding of current phenomena. When addressing education in the liquid era, he raises questions about the teachings from modernity in the face of the challenges of the liquid era and the obstacles imposed by them. If the idea of consumption is a determinant in sociological analysis and a hallmark of current society for him, there are certainly many convergences regarding the possibilities of thinking about private education in light of new technologies and teaching modalities.

To organize the ideas, we will divide this work into four parts. The first one, subtitled "The *'jeitinho'* (a way of getting things done) and the 'do you know who you're talking to?' of DaMatta and some characteristics of everyday life in Brazil," aims to highlight some aspects of Brazilian culture, specifically in daily relations, which we consider important when incorporated into the debate about education in Brazil⁴. In a second moment, we present some ideas of Bourdieu in the subtitle named "Bourdieu: and the critique of education as a reproductive model," where we aim to highlight the problematic nature of education as a reproductive rather than a transformative model of social reality.

In the third subtitle, "*Bauman e a transformação da educação na era líquida* (Bauman and the transformation of education in the liquid era)," we seek an interpretation of the author's

⁴ Focus under which we already discussed at the LASA meeting of June 2013 in Washington, DC, under the title: "The 'Do you know who you're talking to?' and education in Brazil: paradoxes and dilemmas for a critical interpretation of the private higher education system".

views on the theme of education in the current era, which he calls liquid modernity, and we present some alternatives drawn from his interpreters on the subject and some observations about future challenges⁵. To conclude this work, we present in the subtitle "Everyday life, reproduction, and the liquid era: possible dialogues?" an attempt to build a dialogue between these authors and their ideas, as well as to show some data about private higher education in Brazil.

The '*jeitinho*' and the 'Do you know who you're talking to?' of DaMatta and some characteristics of everyday life in Brazil

In the development of studies about Brazil, it is noteworthy, especially from the contributions of anthropologist Roberto DaMatta to the understanding of the rites that form its culture, the adoption of the Brazilian '*jeitinho*,' sometimes characterized by the interrogative "do you know who you're talking to?" which arises as a tool for maintaining the hierarchical social position and, consequently, the status quo. The practice of "Do you know who you're talking to?" appears in various segments of society, among which it will be used as a basis to demonstrate and highlight difficulties in some situations of social relations occurring in the daily life of private educational institutions.

We are struck, at first, by the enormous difficulty of imposing transformations through questioning and divergent positions. DaMatta (1997) highlights that individuals are educated from an early age to only question in extreme situations (or never at all), considering that questioning would be seen as an affront, an act performed in those moments when we want to "bring someone down." In Brazil, often, questioning implies creating a problem.

Colonization has left deep marks, and the 'European culture,' whether in formal or informal education, has ended up establishing a hierarchical social "organization" marked by a paternalistic and aristocratic (elitist) logic on the one hand, and constant unequal power struggles on the other.

One of the characteristics highlighted in DaMatta's work (1997) is the submission and admiration for the European (and later American) model as a recipe for dealing with all problems. Copying how problems are solved would be the formula for success in facing our

⁵ On this subject, we constructed a debate outlined in an article presented at the National Association of Postgraduate Studies and Research in Social Sciences (ANPOCS) in 2012, held in Águas de Lindóia, SP. In this article, we presented a text based on a conversation with Professor Bauman, which took place on May 1, 2012, at his home (and was recorded on video) in Leeds, England. This conversation can be viewed at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8c23xhnrLLU>.

problems. Certainly, the imported educational model from Europe, since the sending of noble children to study in the Old Continent, has left marked traces in our way of educating.

Education has certainly been and still represents a differentiation tool (symbolic capital) in a country where a meager portion of the population attends higher education. For this reason, it is an instrument of differentiation among people in Brazilian society and all places in the world, but it carries a differentiated weight here since it is naively pointed out as the instrument or recipe capable of transforming reality as if by magic. The golden formula would only materialize with an increase in the student population, and that would be enough to change the scenario. A mathematization of social life based on the belief that more students automatically means a better society. It is essential to analyze the neglect of education from this perspective, as a significant portion of the voting population ends up being convinced by the increase in numbers without even reflecting on the quality and objectives of education.

We do not intend here to exclude education as a truly transformative factor in society, which would contradict an evident and necessary instrument, but to question whether the meritocratic model proposed is really capable of generating the essential and effective transformations in a country where inequality still prevails. The problem is that, in opposition to the prevailing discourse, the weight given to the role of education, confusing and ambiguous, actually serves as an essential tool for discrimination and differentiation.

DaMatta (1997) draws attention to an existing dichotomy in Brazil between the particular and the global:

The system, then, operates on two distinct levels: one, which individualizes down to the biographical level; the other, commonly referred to as "legislative," operates through global laws, avoiding direct contact with individuals at all times, as emphasized in another context by Crozier (1964: 221-236). It's as if we have two bases through which we think about our system. In the case of general laws and repression, we always follow the bureaucratic code or the impersonal and universalizing, egalitarian aspect of the system. But in the case of concrete situations, those that "life" presents us with, we always follow the code of relationships and personal morality, taking the path of "finding a way," "street smarts," and solidarity as the axis of action. In the first choice, our unity is the individual; in the second, it is the person. The person deserves solidarity and differential treatment. The individual, on the other hand, is the subject of the law, an abstract focus for whom rules and repression were made. From this separation, many important consequences derive (DaMatta, 1997, p. 218, our translation).

In education, we have a set of rules, norms, and laws supposedly created for the individual to be educated (a conservative education model). At the end of the educational path,

we would have, therefore, at least in terms of obtaining the diploma, an educated/formed individual. Someone is more capable of dealing with the bureaucratic or legal aspect of society since they possess a 'cultural baggage' that enables them to do so. This is an important sphere, as it promotes the individuals, few and rare, who reach this stage with the privilege of having a diploma. Research shows that this individual will very likely be among those with the highest economic gains throughout their lives, as indicated in reports from DIEESE (Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies)⁶. Being in the financial elite and still 'educated' more than others, this individual will certainly have more opportunities, chances, and real conditions to achieve success in life. Considering the same logic of analysis described in the lines above.

However, DaMatta (1997) draws attention to an aspect related to the economic question, which is not found in other works of Brazilian social analysis, and concerns the "*jeitinho*" and "knowing who you're talking to". Interestingly, the moral dispute surpasses the supposedly obvious and evident idea that disputes would only occur between social classes (from top to bottom). The "*jeitinho*" and "knowing who you're talking to" are available to everyone, regardless of social class, although in the latter case, financial status and years of education count in favor of the actor.

In other words, although there are general laws, conceived and created, at least in theory, to establish a form to be followed by all aiming for 'just' and 'adequate' social coexistence, even though individuals act as guarantors of this "system," in their individualities, they end up resorting to the "Brazilian way" and "Do you know who you're talking to?" This is undoubtedly a social instrument where relationships are established from the moral sphere, being decisive in the conduct of the system, permeating all the gaps not occupied by law, state, or economy. This formula would be "a function of the hierarchical dimension and patronage that permeates our differential relationships and allows, consequently, the establishment of personalized links in basically impersonal activities" (DaMatta, 1997, p. 195, our translation).

⁶ According to reports from DIEESE (Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies) released in 2007, the income level of employed individuals (workers) according to years of education in Brazil in 2005, in percentages, is as follows: there is a significant increase in earnings for individuals with 15 or more years of education. Among those who studied for 15 or more years, 50.9% have income between 5 and 20 minimum wages, divided as follows: 27.3% receive from 5 to 10 minimum wages, 16.2% receive from 10 to 20 minimum wages, and 7.4% receive more than 20 minimum wages. Individuals with incomes of 5 minimum wages are within the Brazilian age group that earns at least five times more than the average Brazilian population. Additionally, 2.4% of families in Brazil earn approximately 20 minimum wages, according to the 2000 SENSO (<http://www.dieese.org.br/anu/anuario2007.pdf>).

From the moment social relations are permeated by a hierarchy, which, as a result of a system dominated by totality, differentiates individuals between "strong" and "weak," and still has to accept this panorama as something natural, conflicts tend to be seen as irregularities (DaMatta, 1997, p. 184).

The author explains:

In other words, the cases of applying "Do you know who you're talking to?" reveal a social structure in which social classes also communicate through a system of intersecting relationships (cf. Gluckman, 1965) that probably partially inhibits conflicts and the system of social and political differentiation based on the economic dimension of the system. In a society thus constituted, where labor relations are added to a set of personal bonds governed by values such as intimacy (cf. Barret, 1972), consideration, favor (cf. Schwartz, 1977), respect (cf. Viveiros de Castro, 1974), and generalizing ethical and aesthetic appreciations (such as the categories of clean, well-dressed, correct, astute, good, genteel, etc.), there are possibilities for a continuous and multiple hierarchization of all positions in the system, even when they are radically differentiated or formally identical (DaMatta, 1997, p. 192, our translation).

Now, it's not just the economic issue at the center of the discussion, but the ability to personalize situations when necessary and to use cunning to benefit oneself and justify any necessary situation. Uncovering this detail interwoven into Brazilian culture can be extremely useful in understanding, for example, the everyday situations in classrooms that, supported by a conservative model, as is Brazilian society, point out and reaffirm the maintenance of a system that cares little for a transformative and alternative logic of education. It means that the oppressed class, by reproducing this model or employing the above-mentioned cunning tactics (gaining advantages, finding a way), does not alter its condition, nor does it pay attention to its condition of submissiveness and immobility. At another moment, DaMatta (1997) clarifies:

Because we generally have drastic laws that are impossible to rigorously obey, we end up not complying with the law. Thus, we resort to the classic "jeitinho," which is nothing more than a cordial variant of "Do you know who you're talking to?" and other more authoritarian forms that make it easier and allow for circumventing the law or creating a noble exception in it that is socially confirmed. But the use of the "jeitinho" and the "do you know who you're talking to?" ends up engendering a very well-known and widespread phenomenon among us: total distrust regarding universalizing rules and decrees. However, this distrust generates its own antithesis, which is the permanent hope of seeing the laws finally implemented and obeyed. We judge, in this way, that society can be changed by the good laws that some government may finally establish and enforce. (...) The force of the law is, therefore, a hope. For the deprived, it serves as a lever to express a better future (laws for us and not against us), and for the powerful, it serves as a tool to destroy the political adversary. In either case, the law is rarely seen as law, that is, as an impartial rule. Legislating, therefore, is more basic than enforcing the

law. But, consider the dilemma, it is precisely because we trust so much in the cold force of the law as an instrument of changing the world that, dialectically, we invent so many laws and render them inoperative. Thus, the system of personal relationships that the rules intend to weaken or destroy becomes increasingly strong and vigorous, so that we effectively have one system feeding another (DaMatta, 1997, p. 183, our translation).

With that said, it becomes evident that if we think of education as an instrument of supposed transformation of reality (which creates laws), we are talking about a model that rewards some and disadvantages others and, at the same time, perpetuates a status quo that favors the educated elite at the expense of the population without access to education, but who believes in it as the driving force for transforming reality.

What is seen in the practice of private higher education, to return to the object of our analysis, is a consumer discourse on the part of students who demand "rights" through market-based hierarchical authorization (I pay, therefore I demand). Here appear the "*jeitinho*" and the "Do you know who you're talking to?" The "*jeitinho*" manifests in exams through cheating and schemes that bypass rules and honesty, for example. Also, the "Do you know who you're talking to?" because I am a good-paying customer and, as such, always need to be right. I am the one who pays the teacher's salary, therefore, he owes me more than the respect expected from this relationship; I am his boss.

On the part of the teachers, protected by the 'mantle of knowledge,' an authoritarian discourse ("Do you know who you're talking to?") is seen based on the difference in study time legitimized by a conservative model that found a perfect fit here to reproduce and perpetuate itself as in few places in the world (education is discipline, they will argue). The "*jeitinho*" is also an important instrument in private institutions because it represents the maneuvering mechanism that allows pleasing students, colleagues, and managers through momentary pretenses ranging from turning a blind eye in evaluation to being well-rated by students, and consequently securing the approval for continued employment in the institution where they work, to the incompetence of colleagues who are also friends who need to be there even though they are not qualified for it due to reasons of affection or simply belonging to a group of privileged individuals who fulfill specific roles (unrelated to teaching) in the institution.

Finally, the analysis of Roberto DaMatta's work (1997) is highly revealing from the point of view of understanding Brazilian daily social relations and serves as a warning for the complex task of analyzing the core of private higher education, as situations are at stake that could add to essential analyses of oppressed/oppressor or law/offender in order to broaden discussions and generate new knowledge and perhaps more assertive public policies.

Bourdieu: and the critique of education as a reproductive model

Bourdieu (1975) develops a critical sociology of education that breaks with the still predominant pedagogical optimism in official discourses about the educational system. According to his view, this system is constructed to identify and reify intelligence, to valorize talent and vocation. Those possessing these qualities have access to science and culture and will succeed in school and beyond. On the other hand, others will occupy inferior functions and content themselves with subordinate positions. He engages in a sociology of denunciation that, by exposing the effects of domination on agents, provides arguments mobilizable for political action. This means the construction of an instrument for the liberation of the dominated. Sociology, for him, must become a counter-power and favor democracy, as it opposes counter-symbolic violence to symbolic power.

Bourdieu understands language as a socio-historical phenomenon and linguistic exchanges possessing socio-historical dimensions. Dictionaries and manuals legitimize the habitus of the upper classes and allow them to act better in the face of official forms of interaction, unlike the lower classes who, in the same situations, find themselves in difficulty. Therefore, Bourdieu seeks to break with the prevailing pedagogical optimism in discourses about the educational system. In France, in his time, there was pride in having every one of school age in school since 1900. This achievement led the vast majority of French theorists and scholars to believe that conditions were given for everyone to compete for social spaces within the fields meritocratically. Bourdieu (1975) shows through research that the conditions and inequality of opportunities are even more glaring in a model that advocates traditionalist methods and disregards the dominant segments as legitimately 'authorized' to move forward towards socially higher positions and roles. Bourdieu asserts:

Indeed, for the more favored to be favored and the less favored to be disfavored, it is necessary and sufficient for the school to ignore the scope of the content it transmits, the methods and techniques of transmission, and criteria for evaluation, the cultural inequalities among children from different social classes. In other words, by treating all students, no matter how unequal they may be in reality, as equals in rights and duties, the school system is led to sanction the initial inequalities in culture (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 53, our translation).

The educational model, adopted by various countries, is structured in such a way as to identify and reify a certain type of intelligence and to valorize the gift and vocation of certain social subjects. Those who possess such attributes, obviously not inherited innately, will have access to science and culture and succeed in school and beyond. On the other hand, those who

do not have them will be excluded and at the mercy of social 'leftovers' (subordinate positions) or nothing (marginalized). The school, as such, is clothed in a meritocratic appearance disguised by pedagogical action and a system that generates symbolic violence.

Sociology should contribute to an emancipatory action by studying social representations of the social world and elucidating the arbitrary nature of certain historically disseminated thought schemes. Sociologists should not be at the mercy of those who commission studies. They should not be a reproducer of historically constructed definitions designed to legitimize events and theoretically serve as a crutch for justifications. At the same time, they should strive to translate their theory in a way that constitutes a language accessible to all. By exposing the effects of domination on social agents, sociology provides arguments and opens up possibilities for political mobilizations, which constitutes an instrument of liberation for the dominated.

Bauman and the transformation of education in the Liquid Era

Education is not a central concept in the extensive work of the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman⁷. In the books translated into Portuguese, this theme becomes clearer for the first time in the book *'Legisladores e Intérpretes (Legislators and Interpreters)'* by Bauman (2010). In 2011, Bauman's book *'44 cartas do mundo líquido moderno (44 Letters from the Modern Liquid World)'* (2011) brings three chapters on the subject. Only in 2013 did the first work dedicated to the theme arrive in the book *'Sobre educação e juventude (On Education and Youth'* by Bauman) (2013), which was published a year earlier in England. Regarding the connection of this author with the theme of education and also the analysis of his thought, Almeida, Gomes, and Bracht (2009) provide an essential contribution to the book *Bauman & Education*.

In the work "Legislators and Interpreters" (ibid), Bauman (2010) analyzed the role of the modern School as an instrument for the universalization of values that were useful for social integration. It was within it that the rules capable of transforming the incapable and uncultured into useful subjects for the society of the order that was sought to be built resided. It is curious to note that although speaking of decades ago, the discourse on education today is not so far

⁷Almeida and Gomes, however, detail Bauman's possible contributions to the field in the entry "education" of the Critical-Hermeneutic Dictionary of Zygmunt Bauman (Cassol *et al.*, 2021). This dictionary delves into 39 entries, themes, and recurring concepts in the author's work by bringing together various authors who have dedicated themselves to addressing each topic and expanding the debate on these specificities. What makes this work important and fundamental for those who want to learn more about the author.

from the absurdities noted by Bauman. All ambivalence, disorder, and chaos were and still are frowned upon by the School, which since then had as its project the idea of order and mechanization of subjects. Almeida, Gomes, and Bracht affirm that:

This is why we can say that the modern schooling project reserved no place for differences and the multiple forms of life and cultural traditions that it reached. The School was the place to obtain a universal culture, which coincided with the ordering and planning desires of legislators (educators and teachers) and modern gardeners (Almeida; Gomes; Bracht, 2009, p. 49, our translation).

With the idea of the factory of the order passed, which for Bauman coincides with the transition from modernity to liquid modernity⁸, Bauman's interpreters talk about what they believe to be a crisis based on the bankruptcy of institutions inherited from solid modernity. Little by little, the idea of the ordering State was replaced by what the forces of the market demanded. The current disorder and the incessant pursuit of consumption shifted the focus of what was called education.

Commercialization caused the temples of education to cease being instruments of the State in its rationalizing effort. However, the supposed beneficence in this process, capable of manifesting itself in the construction of a new school receptive to the plurality and multiplicity of meanings of many cultures, still struggles in the Brazilian case against the predominant delay of this old and conservative discourse of order. On the other hand, the idea of freedom in today's consumer society is linked to the possibility of consumption, and those unable to consume are seen as the new incapable in this model. It is in the difference that consumerist society has learned to compare; its struggles for profit, inserted in the idea of prosperity and market, have brought social relations into an even more complicated and complex field.

As a result of all this, the current era has curiously become an era of encapsulation and isolation that hinder dialogue, commitment, or engagement as tools of education. Gradually, the task of determining and pointing out the correct path intended and aimed for in modernity has been replaced by the task of interpreting the multiple possibilities of pluralities of ways of life in the liquid era, in the face of the exaggerated pursuit of the march of reason of yore, which

⁸ Bauman refers here to a society where the "individualized and privatized version of modernity, and the weight of the fabric of standards and responsibility for failure fall mainly on the shoulders of individuals. It is the turn of the liquefaction of patterns of dependence and interaction. They are now malleable to a point that past generations did not experience and could not imagine; but like all fluids, they do not hold shape for long. Giving them shape is easier than keeping them in it" (Bauman, 2001, p. 14, our translation).

has brought about lies, humiliations, and sufferings as consequences. Furthermore, in the interpretation of Almeida, Gomes, and Bracht (2009):

Bauman's perspective does not feed, among intellectuals of liquid modernity, the expectation of achieving a supra-cultural and universal point of view, free from all contingency, from which they could scrutinize and portray the meaning of the true, separating it from the false. The proclamation of truth as a quality of knowledge, an unquestionable assumption of intellectuals of solid modernity, is unsustainable in times of post-legislation. The new framework will only require intellectuals (therefore, teachers) a much more humble task: to be specialists in the art of translation between different cultural traditions (Almeida; Gomes; Bracht, 2009, p. 55, our translation).

Although this new role may seem distressing and uncertain in terms of the pedagogical process, it provides an opportunity for an educational practice based on the multiplicity of values. Engaging with the different ways of seeing the world that arrive at school is the path in this era, understanding them instead of nullifying them, valuing them instead of annihilating them.

For Bauman, according to his analysts, Almeida, Gomes, and Bracht:

[...] it is the republican model of society that offers the most promising scenario for the encounter of these cultural differences, as in it the various values of the same society or between different social groups are examined and openly discussed. This openness to others is a precondition for a different humanity, and the school, this is the expectation, can and should take part in it (Almeida; Gomes; Bracht, 2009, p. 58, our translation).

The everyday school or university environment, with its peculiarities and curiosities, may actually be the opposite of what was once fought against in order to organize things in an ideal model. This model based on legislative foundations still prevails in Brazil to such an extent that it persists today in the face of evaluative models in all spheres, for example. Our responsibility is to ensure that "[...] no possibility of a better destiny for humanity is ignored or neglected, which may pass or be led through this openness" (Bauman, 2000, p. 98, our translation).

Everyday Life, Reproduction, and the Liquid Era: Possible Dialogues?

In light of the above and the analysis of some of the ideas of the key authors of this work, we proceed to an attempt at dialogue between their thoughts. In addition to this proposal, we aim to present data revealing important numerical aspects of the reality of private higher education in Brazil, according to information from Brazilian entities responsible for these assessments.

Formal education in Brazil undergoes constant evaluation, fostering a culture of "ranking" through increasingly complex and not always clear indices. One of the drawbacks of subjecting education to objective evaluations that generate grades and/or concepts, especially in private education, lies in the creation of pedagogical plans focused on the evaluative process of the educational institution, leaving the student and the teacher as mere ornaments in the education process. In noting this, we already establish a connection with the authors mentioned above by recalling Bourdieu's analysis, which, since 1975 in France, has questioned quantitative data and methods at the expense of teaching quality and concern for inequality.

For DaMatta (1997), the desire to solve Brazil's problems legalistically, anchored in a belief historically linked to colonization and the cultivation of an educational model originally based on catechesis, ends up valuing the creation of laws as if they were magical formulas indicating the correct path. Curiously, the cultural characteristics highlighted by the author point to this path insofar as society is still strongly rooted in patrimonialist and aristocratic values, where certainty comes from unquestionable central superior decisions. If we compare what Bauman (2010) calls solid modernity and its legislative characteristics, we also echo this logic of framing individuals through education as an instrument for such purposes.

Enshrined in the Federal Constitution of the country, as a reminder inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution, is the principle that all are equal before the law (Brasil, 1988, art. 5º). The concept of equality is subject to great debate, which would warrant a study of its own, but since Aristotle and Plato, it has been understood that equality consists of treating unequal unequally.

The principle of equality, or isonomy, is expressly provided for in the Brazilian Federal Constitution, in its Article 5, section 1 ("all are equal before the law") and the same article, section I ("men and women are equal in rights and obligations, in terms of this Constitution") (Brasil, 1988, art. 5). This principle establishes that equals should be treated equally and unequal unequally, according to their differences.

This idea of equality was projected onto formal education when it was believed that schools should educate individuals, providing them with instruments of freedom and even generating social mobility. However, the opposite is often observed (Bonnewitz, 2003). According to DaMatta (1997), the question of equality in Brazil is extremely complex, as the rituals of '*jeitinho*' (finding a way) and 'do you know who I am?' reveal a peculiar dilemma of Brazilian culture. Through social anthropology or comparative sociology, this author compares similar ideologies, or value systems. In Brazil, he states, to individualize oneself means to renounce the world, social relations, family, friendship, and kinship. The social system is composed of dual relationships, on one side are the structural relationships, and on the other, there is a legal, modern, individualistic, liberal, and bourgeois system that subjugates the masses. From this fact, the sociological truth of the saying is deepened: "To enemies, the law, and to friends, everything" (1997).

By focusing on these aspects of Brazilian culture in the 1980s, when the book was written, we may not expect that the influences of this social model could still survive to this day. However, everyday situations, from which it seems that this author's vision may still be highly valid to interpreting educational phenomena, reveal aspects that contradict the author's analysis and work.

The insertion into educational institutions reaffirms the differences among students and strengthens the figure of the teacher as a reproducer of dominant power, emptying a socializing criterion of equality in school. The adoption of pedagogical processes is carried out through the elaboration of a political, pedagogical project, with the inclusion of learning objectives, as well as the election of a basic curriculum framework. The choice of these objectives is made entirely partially, just as the school curriculum is permeated by themes that represent specific interests, reinforcing the disparity between dominant and dominated classes.

Currently, the Brazilian Ministry of Education determines the minimum curricula for undergraduate courses, even providing a catalog of courses that includes denominations, a summary of the graduate's profile, minimum workload, and recommended infrastructure for 112 technological graduations organized into 13 technological axes. By electing increasingly objective methods, it is evident that the development of higher education in the country is focused on government plans and the achievement of national and international goals, to the detriment of addressing the specific needs of students in each area of knowledge.

The election of a closer evaluation of educational institutions has changed this logic. A clear example is the fact that currently, two evaluators from different institutions are appointed,

who go to the institution to be evaluated armed with their form with various criteria to be answered. The form indicates five general lines, and a rating below three is considered insufficient for the maintenance of activity. The decisions are still based on the same aspects identified by Bauman (2011) in what he called solid modernity, where legislation aimed to frame, correct, and save anyone who deviated from the criteria considered adequate.

Institutions that do not achieve a score equal to or higher than three receive a list of recommendations with deadlines for improvement, and after this adjustment stage, they will be evaluated again by a review commission. In case of non-compliance, the authorization may be revoked. This entire inspection scheme aims to provide equal conditions for institutions, whether public or private, seeking quality from the minimum physical space offered, such as quality libraries and curriculum matrices with objectives aligned with the training of teaching staff, among other pedagogical aspects that were previously overlooked.

However, this procedure is highly questionable because we sometimes have evaluators from competing institutions (to friends everything, to enemies of the law, as DaMatta would say?), moreover, the symbolic power (Bourdieu) attributed to this evaluator often leads to the use of the prerogative to fill out the evaluation form, to impose a certain terror on managers, teachers, and even students in the pedagogical development process of the institution being evaluated. The "Do you know who you're talking to?" is a permanent ritual in most of these evaluations, where power struggles and "maneuvering" are often more valid than the legal bureaucratic process. Although the completion of evaluation forms is gradually being replaced year by year in favor of avoiding overly subjective judgments, it is a measure that certainly pays attention to what analysts in Brazil have been warning about for many years.

As if the evaluation model were not enough, and here we are not stating that evaluation cannot be an essential analysis tool, but only highlighting and questioning the current model, the consequences, and the framework in which institutions need to fit can be most harmful to the educational process. It is that in the name of this framework that measures data and not individuals involved in the educational process effectively, institutions start to view their students and teachers as numbers that correspond or not to the "ideal" preached by the Ministry of Education.

When this happens, and given the current economic conditions, there is a great possibility for the educational process to become a mathematization of compliance with rules and norms in pursuit of the best concept attributed by government evaluations, to the detriment of the transformative and critical model that we imagine closer to the ideal role of educational

institutions. Initiatives in this direction tend to be flooded and then drowned by the need, which turns into a matter of survival, to meet goals and bureaucratic procedures.

Suppose the ideal of equalizing graduates from any school stage has gone by the wayside, considering that the educational institution has become a magnifying glass to identify and project inequalities. What can be said about the pursuit of higher education in Brazil?

When accepted through the selection process at a higher education institution, students typically seek qualification for the job market, having already completed their basic education. However, it is not uncommon to observe institutions that promote rampant diploma mills, without any hesitation in symbolically marking individuals as competent professionals, even if they are not. The sale occurs either illegally, which would then involve law enforcement, or in a more covert manner where legal requirements are not disregarded, but the poor quality of education ends up producing students completely unprepared and lacking the real ability to perform what the profession demands. The significant increase in the number of students in higher education also carries with it this aspect of the inevitable decline in the quality of education.

Data from the Higher Education Census, released by the Ministry of Education and the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (Inep, 2013), collected in 2013, show that the total number of students in Brazilian higher education reached 7.3 million, almost 300 thousand enrollments higher than the previous year. There was an increase in enrollments, from 2012 to 2013, of 3.8%, with 1.9% in public institutions and 4.5% in private institutions.

In 2013, university students were distributed across 32 thousand undergraduate courses, with offerings from 2.4 thousand higher education institutions, of which only 301 were public and the remaining nearly 2 thousand were private. The high demand for institutions offering private education further reinforces inequality in the country in a bizarre way. Those with higher purchasing power usually attend private schools during their primary education.

As public higher education institutions are fewer in number, combined with the fact that there are stricter criteria for the formation of teaching staff and the prestige of having a public university on one's resume, admission is limited and highly competitive. Thus, only the most qualified, who mostly never went through public education, manage to gain admission to free higher education. Although there are initiatives to address this process through quotas for poorer individuals and those from public schools, the debate on this topic still generates controversy and suspicion about the future of institutions and the consequences of such initiatives. Private institutions are already anticipating the possibility of improving their student body with the

occupation by less affluent individuals in public institutions due to the reduction in the number of vacancies in federal institutions. This could lead to another research project.

Bourdieu (2011, p. 41, our translation) asserts that:

[...] A young person from the upper class has eighty times more chances of entering university than the child of a farm laborer and forty times more than the child of a worker, and their chances are still twice as high as those of a young person from the middle class.

It is evident that drawing a parallel between the quality of education and the public or private affiliation of institutions is risky, but data gathered by the Ministry of Education, through both objective and subjective criteria, indicate that private higher education is of lower quality than free education in public universities.

The formation of teaching staff in public and private institutions is quite distinct, as the qualification required, in contrast to the offered remuneration, suggests that private institutions, aiming for higher profit margins, hire teachers without the supposedly more appropriate qualifications, potentially offering them lower wages.

Another important point to highlight is that postgraduate programs that qualify teachers are concentrated in cities with larger populations, resulting in higher-quality teaching staff in metropolitan areas. This forces teachers in rural areas to incur higher costs and dedicate more time to professional qualifications that can be compared to those located in major cities.

The chain of reproduction of inequalities again demonstrates its strength, as less qualified teachers earn meager salaries, making it almost impossible for them to seek improvement in formal qualifications desperately. Without qualifications, income does not increase, and the vicious circle continues. Therefore, we could highlight yet another situation that might warrant study, as under these conditions, the postgraduate education market also becomes fueled by expectations that may be far from the actual idea of qualification to meet numerical expectations again.

To increase income, it is common for private school teachers not to have exclusive dedication, devoting part of their energy to other activities that are not always related to teaching. This situation can be viewed positively, as professionals from the market bring their practical experience to the classroom. On the other hand, it can be considered negative, as some of these teachers view teaching as a secondary activity or engage in it for prestige, without taking the educational process seriously. They may intuitively reproduce an excessive emphasis

on quantitative results since, as participants in the labor market outside the field of education, they are immersed in a culture of competition and meritocracy.

Public institution teachers, generally, have financial incentives for further qualifications, which will increase their income, already quite reasonable compared to most private institutions, as well as facilitate their exclusive dedication to the development of teaching, research, and extension activities.

Regarding entry into higher education, the census of higher education in Brazil identified that the total number of students who entered higher education in 2013 remained stable compared to the previous year, reaching 2.7 million. In this sense, over the past decade, the number of students entering undergraduate courses increased by 76.4%. This increase in the demand for higher education in the country was due to numerous factors, including the facilitation of access to student financing for those seeking private educational institutions.

Consequently, as the demand for this type of college, university center, or university increased, the market also experienced growth. The trade-in higher education from 2003 to 2013, slowing down in the last two years, was extremely profitable. Several basic education schools expanded their offerings to include higher education, even without the structure and qualifications for it, only aiming for a business opportunity.

After disastrous results in quality indices in Brazilian education, the government has outlined a highly rigorous evaluation profile for higher education courses. Without delving into details, the current practice of evaluating higher education institutions involves the completion of the biannual school census (which assesses faculty, research, and extension in particular), as well as the administration of a national exam to incoming and graduating students (to establish a performance difference index among students), and on-site visits to assess classroom conditions, library facilities, adequacy of physical spaces for the disabled, specific laboratories, among others.

When this evaluation format began, there was a rush to address physical deficiencies, such as the illicit practice of borrowing library books to mask a nonexistent structure, as well as the temporary setup of laboratories for display to evaluators. In the name of adjustments, there have been and continue to be true abuses against the educational process, with education being, surprisingly, the last concern.

Through school census tools, where institutions must annually report the number of students, curriculum vitae of all faculty, research and extension projects and programs, and

active curriculum matrices, among other information, data cross-referencing has been reducing/eliminating that illegal practice.

This system was created to curb the opening and maintenance of higher education institutions that do not have the minimum operating conditions. For students and graduates of public schools, the option remains to seek private institutions that offer student financing possibilities at low-interest rates, as well as compete for scholarships.

Also, in an attempt to equalize students in private and public education, the criteria for granting scholarships funded with public resources to students who pay tuition fees, the Ministry of Education has chosen to attend public schools for at least secondary education (which comprises the last three years of basic education in Brazil) as one of the selection criteria.

Private institutions, with the increase in student financing, have expressed concern, as they envision that many students who do not have a basic quality of education could enroll in private institutions due to the ease of payment. This concern is reflected in the evaluation indices of private institutions, as students participate in a national exam to assess learning performance, which is linked to the grade attributed to the educational institution.

Although there are harsh criticisms of private education, often linked to the quality of education offered, it is undeniable that it is responsible for a significant portion of Brazilians' qualifications. Access to public education in basic education is facilitated, as it is decentralized, being the responsibility of States and Municipalities. However, higher education is a federal initiative.

Therefore, in addition to having a significant cultural burden to pass the selection exams for free higher education institutions, the prospective student must have the possibility of dedicating themselves to studying during daytime hours, as well as the ability to relocate, since federal educational institutions are concentrated in major urban centers. This distribution logistics of education also limits public education, as the age group about to enter higher education is also the one sought after by the labor market.

Data from the Annual Social Information Report (RAIS), released by the Ministry of Labor and Employment (2013), in October 2013, reveal that in the age group between 16 and 17 years old, the expansion of employment levels was 5.85%, almost twice the country's average growth, which was 2.48%. It is worth noting that this is the age when young people complete their basic education and begin their journey through higher education.

Furthermore, the cost of living in the metropolitan areas of the capitals, where most federal universities are located, is high. If combined with the decrease in family income, as the productive individual stops sharing their earnings with the family (instead, they become financially dependent on it), the theory of the reproduction of inequality identified through educational instruction is once again reaffirmed.

In light of all this, Pierre Bourdieu highlights (2011, p. 147, our translation):

Recent transformations in the relationships between different social classes and the education system, along with the consequent explosion in schooling and all correlated modifications of the education system itself, as well as all the transformations in social structure resulting (at least in part) from the transformation of the relationships established between diplomas and positions, are the result of an intensification of competition for educational credentials, to which, undoubtedly, the fact that to ensure their reproduction, the fractions of the ruling class (industrial and commercial entrepreneurs) and the middle classes (craftsmen and merchants), the wealthiest in economic capital, have had to intensify their use of the education system significantly.

With the need to obtain bachelor's, teaching, or technology degrees to create a positive differential (as equality remains far from their eyes), individuals seek formal education as a qualification for professional advancement, which is not always achieved. They thus become hostages to a system that violently reproduces inequalities. Amidst this complex process of competition, market forces, numbers, immediate solutions, and survival, education incorporates aspects that diverge from the idea of transforming reality and, as Bourdieu pointed out long ago, functions as a reproduction of a system. Transforming reality, although the prevailing discourse suggests that education is the answer to problems, ceases to be just a difficulty and becomes a challenge that only altruists (would they be heroes?) are willing and able to face.

Final considerations

Finally, as evidenced throughout this work, Bauman (2013) suggests that contemporary society is undergoing significant changes, making the educational process a challenge that requires an approach based on dialogue and understanding, rather than the imposition of determinations, favoring interpretation. DaMatta (1997), in turn, provides valuable insights into understanding social relations at the heart of Brazilian society, revealing some peculiar dilemmas of our reality, such as our condition as colonized and, at the same time, as creative agents and problem solvers. Bourdieu (1975), by denouncing the reproducing model in France, also sheds light on our reality, emphasizing that education should not only reinforce meritocracy

but also reduce inequality and emancipate the less privileged classes. Although the three authors produced their works in different geographical and historical contexts (Brazil, France, England), and despite it being uncommon to find them together in analyses on education, this is not due to the incompatibility of their ideas. This separation is more a result of the habitual tendency to focus on specific authors and themes when it comes to education.

Even in other studies, more commonly practiced in academic analyses, concerning the proposed theme here, it is possible to find discourse about the need to create alternatives to the model that is currently in place. We do not diverge so much in objective and analysis. Perhaps we are proposing to build a different path, but one that sees similar problems when touching and raising questions that have so far become unthinkable, as they invite anthropology and sociology to dialogue with education. Creating an interdisciplinary alternative may not have been the clearest objective in our minds when we began to work on our ideas. But it seems inevitable and necessary as we unveil the reality under which we have delved.

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