

**DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN BASIC EDUCATION: MODERNIZATION OR
DECHARACTERIZATION OF PEDAGOGICAL WORK?**

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DESCARACTERIZAÇÃO DO TRABALHO PEDAGÓGICO?***

***PLATAFORMAS DIGITALES EN LA EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA: ¿MODERNIZACIÓN O
DESCARACTERIZACIÓN DEL TRABAJO PEDAGÓGICO?***



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ABSTRACT: This paper critically analyzes the platformization of teaching in basic education as a neoliberal strategy for commodifying and undermining public schools. It identifies the pedagogical foundations of this process in the technicism of the 1960s and in digital neotechnicism, which replaces the ideal of comprehensive human education with the pragmatic learning of skills and competencies to adapt individuals to the demands of capital, in addition to intensifying authoritarian control over teaching work. Focusing on the state education systems of São Paulo and Paraná, the paper argues that the imposition of platforms developed by private “partners” empties scientific, philosophical, and artistic content, neutralizing the transformative potential of education. It concludes by arguing for the need for collective resistance and the uncompromising defense of a public, secular, free, and high-quality school system, articulated with a project to overcome class society.

KEYWORDS: Platformization of education. Digital neotechnicism. Commodification of education. Public school.

RESUMO: O artigo analisa criticamente a plataformação do ensino na educação básica enquanto estratégia neoliberal de mercantilização e precarização da escola pública. Identifica no tecnicismo da década de 1960 e no neotecnismo digital as bases pedagógicas desse processo, que substitui o ideal de formação humana integral pela aprendizagem pragmática de habilidades e competências para adaptar os indivíduos às demandas do capital, além de intensificar o controle autoritário sobre o trabalho docente. Com foco nas redes estaduais de ensino de São Paulo e do Paraná, o artigo argumenta que a imposição de plataformas desenvolvidas por “parceiros” privados esvazia conteúdos científicos, filosóficos e artísticos, neutralizando o potencial transformador da educação. Conclui pela necessidade de resistência coletiva e da defesa intransigente de uma escola pública, laica, gratuita e de qualidade, articulada a um projeto de superação da sociedade de classes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Plataformação do ensino. Neotecnismo digital. Mercantilização da educação. Escola pública.

RESUMEN: El artículo analiza críticamente la plataforma de la enseñanza en la educación básica como estrategia neoliberal de mercantilización y precarización de la escuela pública. Identifica en el tecnicismo de la década de 1960 y en el neotecnismo digital las bases pedagógicas de este proceso, que sustituye el ideal de formación humana integral por el aprendizaje pragmático de habilidades y competencias para adaptar a los individuos a las exigencias del capital, además de intensificar el control autoritario sobre el trabajo docente. Centrándose en las redes estatales de enseñanza de São Paulo y Paraná, el artículo argumenta que la imposición de plataformas desarrolladas por “socios” privados vacía los contenidos científico, filosófico y artístico, neutralizando el potencial transformador de la educación. Concluye con la necesidad de una resistencia colectiva y la defensa intransigente de una escuela pública, laica, gratuita y de calidad, articulada con un proyecto de superación de la sociedad de clases.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Plataformação de la enseñanza. Neotecnismo digital. Mercantilización de la educación. Escuela pública.

Introduction

The term pedagogical work contains two elements: on the one hand, it characterizes this activity as work and, on the other, it specifies that the central function of this activity is pedagogical in nature. The work activity, in its basic form, is an action of transforming material objects and phenomena with a view to producing certain goods necessary for human beings in a society. In chapter 5 of the first book of *Capital*, Marx (2013, pp. 255-275) analyzed work from two angles, the first being the universal elements of the work process, existing in any society, and the second being the characteristics of work in capitalist society, in which this activity becomes a commodity capable of producing surplus value. Marx identified three universal elements of labor: “The simple moments of the labor process are, first, the activity directed toward an end, or labor itself; second, its object; and third, its means” (Marx, 2013, p. 256). It so happens that the relations of production specific to capitalist society generate contradictions and inversions in the relations between these three elements. The means of labor are no longer just tools at the disposal of the subject performing the activity; they are part of capital, and the production process is organized according to social parameters of productivity. As a result, the people who perform the work activity are not the ones who determine the purposes of that activity and do not control the use of the means of action on the object of labor. It is not the means that are subject to the people who perform the activity, but rather these people are subject to the ways in which the production process is organized. In other words, the subjects assume the condition of instruments, and the instruments begin to control what people do, how they do it, and the pace of their actions.

This situation creates a dissociation between the individuality of the worker and the activity, albeit to varying degrees, depending on the specific conditions in which the various types of work are performed. This alienation or estrangement between the worker and their activity is not just a subjective, psychological issue, although the subjective effects are undeniable, causing, among other things, various forms of psychological suffering in the worker. As the origin of this phenomenon is socially objective, no matter how much individuals seek to engage subjectively with their work activity, objective conditions will inevitably impose obstacles and limits on this engagement. As we have said, this situation contains gradations that depend both on the type of work and on the circumstances in which the activities are carried out. This variability in the degree of alienation existing in a work situation does not alter, however, the fact that whenever work is subjected to the logic of capital, there is an objective tendency to subordinate the content of the activity to ends that are external to it. Whatever the

activity, when it is subjected to the logic of capital, what would be its primary purposes take a back seat, as they are always subject to the parameters of productivity and profitability.

This phenomenon is particularly visible in the areas of education and health, and it is no coincidence, since these are two areas that, although they have different purposes, in both cases the activity is directed at people. In activities directed at objects, the alienation of work does not necessarily harm the result, although this can occur in certain circumstances. However, when the activity is directed at people, as is the case in the areas of education and health, the alienation of work necessarily interferes negatively with the result.

In recent decades, Brazilian public education has been subjected to two closely linked processes: the linking of public institutions to companies in the education sector, and the organization of pedagogical work according to the logic of digital neotechnicism. An extreme form of the intimate unity of these two processes is the phenomenon of the authoritarian and traumatic imposition of the platformization of teaching in the state education networks in the states of Paraná and São Paulo.

The reasons given by business leaders for subordinating public schools to commercial parameters and processes driven by digital technology are increased efficiency and modernization. In this paper, we argue that it is neither of these, but rather a process of decharacterizing pedagogical work, distancing school content from scientific, philosophical, and artistic knowledge in its richest forms, and, last but not least, nullifying the autonomy of teachers and students who find themselves commanded by the rhythm and logic of digital technology. For clarification purposes, it is important to note that the criticism is not directed at technology itself, but at its insertion subordinated to commercial and control logic.

In stark opposition to this process, this paper stands alongside all those who defend the republican school based on its basic characteristics: state-run, free, secular, and democratic, both in terms of guaranteeing universal access and in the universality of the purpose of “socializing systematized knowledge” (Saviani, 2011, p. 14). Analyzing the ongoing process of decharacterization of pedagogical work disguised as modernization and efficiency is not a mere exercise in academic criticism, but a necessary moment of active resistance which, as Saviani (2006, pp. 235-236) argued, in order to be effective, must be a collective and purposeful action.

Technicism as a pedagogical approach

Dermeval Saviani, in *História das ideias pedagógicas no Brasil* (2021), analyzes technicism as a pedagogy that emerged in the second half of the 20th century, in the international context of the Cold War, especially after the space race triggered by the launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union in 1956. This event “sparked a wave of questions about new education,” mainly because “Western propaganda had been striving to convince people that education in Russia, in addition to being authoritarian and undemocratic, was inferior to that in the United States” (Saviani, 2021, p. 340).

In this scenario, the argument that schools should respond to the demands of industrialization and the need to train skilled labor, with a view to national economic development, was reinforced. This position was based on the so-called human capital theory, formulated by Theodor Schultz and disseminated in Brazil through works such as *O valor econômico da educação*, in 1967 (the original in English is from 1963), and *O capital humano: investimento em educação e pesquisa*, in 1973 (in the United States, 1971) (Saviani, 2021). Regarding human capital theory, Gaudêncio Frigotto (1989) summarizes its implications for education as follows:

The educational process, whether school-based or not, is reduced to the function of producing a set of intellectual skills, developing certain attitudes, and transmitting a certain amount of knowledge that serve as generators of work capacity and, consequently, of production. Depending on the specificity and complexity of the occupation, the nature and volume of these skills should vary. Education thus becomes one of the fundamental factors in explaining, in economic terms, differences in work capacity and, consequently, differences in productivity and income. (Frigotto, 1989, p. 40)

According to Dermeval Saviani (2021, p. 381), based on

the assumption of scientific neutrality inspired by the principles of rationality, efficiency, and productivity, technicist pedagogy advocates for the reordering of the educational process in a way that makes it objective and operational. Similar to what occurred in factory work, the aim is to objectify pedagogical work.

However, even before its formulation in the pedagogical plan, technicism was already evident in schools through the administrative model implemented during the Estado Novo (New

State) period (1937-1945). This model, implemented under the supervision of New School theorists, is characterized as follows by Rita Duarte (2020):

solutions for the dynamics of Brazilian schools were gradually developed by importing business administration theory and practice, which in turn found the basis for its practical and ideological thinking in Taylor and Fayol's General Theory of Administration.

The period of industrial expansion in Brazil was fundamental for spreading business management theories in our schools, and factory techniques and objectives were transported and adapted by our school management scholars as a generally applicable means of modernizing our educational system, creating standards, laws, goals, division, and hierarchy of labor, just like in a factory. (Duarte, 2020, p. 50)

This dynamic has resulted in the use of the terms "school administration" and "school supervision," employed, respectively, to designate those who manage and those who oversee the functioning of educational institutions.

Technicist pedagogy was institutionalized in Brazilian public schools during the military dictatorship, which began with the coup d'état in 1964 and remained in place, in institutional terms, until 1985. Economically, this regime intensified incentives for foreign companies to enter the country, operating under rules that allowed them to mask their origins by presenting themselves as mixed capital—foreign and domestic. These were the so-called multinationals, which operated mainly in the durable consumer goods market, such as motor vehicles and household appliances, as well as in the chemical and pharmaceutical sectors. This dynamic expressed the economic model that Saviani (2021) calls associated-independent, which "strengthened Brazil's ties with the United States." According to this author:

With the arrival of these companies, the organizational model that governed them was also imported. And the demand for workforce training for these same companies, combined with the goal of generally increasing the productivity of the school system, led to the adoption of that organizational model in the field of education. (Saviani, 2021, p. 367)

Milestones in the institutionalization of technical education include the University Reform (Law No. 5,540, dated November 28, 1968) and the implementation of technical education in secondary schools, established by Law No. 5,692, dated August 11, 1971. With these laws, education began to be oriented primarily toward the training of not only elementary workers, but above all technicians, engineers, and industrial managers.

If, on the one hand, technical pedagogy emerged in Brazil in the context of a dictatorship, on the other hand, internationally it should be understood as an outcome of liberal pedagogy, which is primarily concerned with preparing individuals to occupy a certain place in society according to their supposed aptitudes, disregarding structural inequalities and contributing to the reproduction of bourgeois ideology. In this sense, it is a pedagogy that aims to adapt the individual to the productive system, conceiving education as an instrument for training labor according to the needs of the labor market and disconnected from commitments to broader social transformations.

An important component of the liberal scenario that influences technicist pedagogy is American behavioral psychology, notably based on Skinner's conception. In this context, the adoption of textbooks accompanied by workbooks, books organized entirely as directed study, and textbook-based teaching became widespread, in addition to the widespread use of multiple-choice tests, which, in technicist pedagogy, were considered an "objective" form of assessment, i.e., eliminating the subjectivity of the teacher and reinforcing "correct" behavior in students.

Even in the Brazilian case, it is not correct to associate technicism solely with dictatorship. If this were the case, the New School should also be associated with dictatorial contexts, since, in Italy, the Gentile reform, inspired by the New School, was carried out during Mussolini's fascist government. Specifically in relation to technicism in Brazilian education in the 1970s, there was a kind of symbiosis between Piaget's genetic psychology, the pedagogical principles of the New School, and technicist teaching guidelines. This is evident in the book *Didática para a escola de 1º e 2º graus*, a collection published in 1972, with contributions from professors from the Faculty of Education at the University of São Paulo, namely: Amélia Domingues de Castro, Ana Maria Pessoa de Carvalho, Clara Alterman Colotto, Edna Chagas Cruz, Gilda Cesar Nogueira de Lima, Maria Aparecida Cintra, Nélío Parra, and Newton Cesar Balzan (Castro, 1973). This collection includes texts on Law No. 5,692, of August 11, 1971, primary and secondary education, active methods and schools, audiovisual teaching techniques, programmed instruction, directed work, environmental studies, objective tests, etc. The collection's epigraph is not a passage from Skinner, but rather from Jean Piaget. This shows that Piaget was present in Brazilian education during the heyday of the New School movement, during the technicism era, and continued to be present with the arrival of the constructivist movement in the 1980s.

Neotechnicism as an expression of neoliberalism

In addition to the political context of crisis under the dictatorship and the achievement of a certain degree of democracy—which allowed for the emergence, in the educational debate, of various elements critical of the educational model adopted by the military regime—another crisis developed in parallel from the early 1970s onwards: the crisis of capitalist society that led to the restructuring of production processes, revolutionizing the technical basis of production and leading to the replacement of Fordism by Toyotism.

The Fordist model was based on the installation of large factories operating with heavy fixed-base technology, incorporating Taylorist methods of work rationalization; it assumed job stability and aimed at the mass production of standardized objects on a large scale, accumulating large stocks for mass consumption. In contrast, the Toyotist model is based on flexible microelectronic light technology and operates with multi-skilled workers aiming at the production of diversified objects on a small scale to meet the demand of specific market niches, incorporating methods such as just-in-time that do not require the formation of inventories; it requires workers who, instead of job stability, compete daily for each position they have earned, embracing the company's values and constantly increasing their productivity. (Saviani, 2021, p. 429)

The productive restructuring described by Saviani (2021) occurs in the context of the so-called globalization of the economy, marked by State Reform policies guided by the so-called “Washington Consensus,” expressed

in a document produced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank together with the Treasury Department of the United States with the aim of implementing in countries considered “developing” or “emerging” the framework of their administrations and economies to the needs and aspirations of international capitalism from a neoliberal perspective. (Derisso & Duarte, 2017, p. 1170)

Associated with neoliberal ideology, a cultural environment has developed that is marked by the advance of postmodern thinking, which proclaims the death of so-called metanarratives as a distinctive feature of a supposed postmodern condition, according to Lyotard (2000). Since 1979, the year of the publication of *The Postmodern Condition*, the influence of this trend has manifested itself in philosophy through different strands, with relevant internal distinctions, such as Foucault's poststructuralism, Richard Rorty's

neopragmatism, Glasersfeld's radical constructivism, the social constructionism of Berger and Luckmann, and also Thomas Kuhn with his theory of scientific paradigms, the epistemological relativism of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Edgar Morin's theory of complexity, among many others. In the case of complexity theory, it is based "on physicist Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle to criticize the linear and fragmentary view of modern science and to defend the thesis of the indeterminability of scientific truth" (Derisso, 2010, p. 52).

The death of metanarratives means, for postmodernism, the death

of History with a capital H, of reason, of science, of philosophy, of art, insofar as everything is art and nothing is art, of politics, which has been replaced by daily resistance to diffuse and decentralized powers, and finally the death of the subject, at least of what postmodernists consider to be the modern subject or subject of modernity. (Duarte, 2004, p. 219)

According to Derisso (2010), this "revision in the conception of science coined by modernity" practically rules out "the possibility of interfering with human and social reality in order to consciously transform it, that is, to bring about a revolution," admitting only the possibility of "small interferences or minor adjustments" (p. 52). In other words, postmodern thinking instrumentalizes the fight against theoretical propositions that underpin political, social, and ideological struggles against the exploitation and oppression of the majority of the population by capitalism, positioning itself, in this sense, in the field of counterrevolution.

Driven by the widespread dissemination of neoliberal and postmodern ideas in various countries, the "pedagogies of learning to learn" (Duarte, 2001) gained strength in Brazil from the second half of the 1980s onwards, including constructivism, project pedagogy, reflective teacher theory, and competency pedagogy. For the present study, we are interested in the link between these "new" pedagogies and the motto "learning to learn," which historically originated in the New School movement and was ideologically attuned, at the end of the 20th century, to neoliberal and postmodern ideas (Duarte, 2001, 2004).

In this context, the pedagogy of competencies, of which Swiss sociologist Philippe Perrenoud is one of the main proponents, comes to the fore. Expressing concern about a certain haste in implementing projects aligned with his conception, Perrenoud made it clear that competencies refer fundamentally to behaviors of adaptation to specific practical contexts:

The description of competencies should stem from the analysis of situations and actions, and knowledge should be derived from this. There is a tendency to move too quickly in all countries that embark on the development of programs without taking the time to observe social practices

and identify situations in which people are and will be truly confronted. What do we really know about the skills that an unemployed person, an immigrant, a person with a disability, a single mother, a dissident, or a young person from the periphery need on a daily basis? (Gentile & Bencini, 2000, p. 2)

The examples presented by the author highlight the limitations of his proposition: the needs of everyday life are both the starting and ending point. As these needs depend on specific social contexts, the educational objects intended for the children of workers and the children of the bourgeoisie will tend to be different. Despite the seemingly progressive rhetoric used by Perrenoud to justify this educational theory, in practice, the pedagogy he advocates focuses on the adaptation of individuals to established social dynamics. Although the French sociologist does not link this pedagogy to neoliberalism, the links between the neoliberal worldview and competency-based pedagogy are very visible and difficult to dispute.

Marise Ramos (2008) argues that competency-based pedagogy works with a conception of knowledge in which the aim is not to know what is or is not real, but rather to understand how individuals can make their actions to adapt to the often unpredictable changes in the social and natural environment more viable.

The validity of knowledge understood in this way is therefore judged by its viability or usefulness. A utilitarian and pragmatic connotation of knowledge thus prevails. Its viability and usefulness, far from being considered historical, are regarded as contingent. In other words, there is no criterion of objectivity, totality, or universality for judging whether a piece of knowledge or representational model is valid, viable, or useful. With this, the historical-ontological character of knowledge is replaced by its experiential character. (Ramos, 2008, p. 6)

In fact, competency-based pedagogy is not alone in adopting this view of knowledge. It is common to all learning-to-learn pedagogies and, as part of them, to so-called active methodologies. As a result, from teacher training courses to basic education classrooms, the prevailing orientation is that knowledge should be meaningful to students and, in the terminology of these pedagogies, knowledge is meaningful when it helps solve practical problems in people's daily lives.

One of the major distortions in school education endorsed by competency-based pedagogy and other learning-to-learn pedagogies lies in the fact that limiting teaching objectives—resulting from prioritizing the development of everyday life skills—consequently

restricts the possibility of disseminating and adopting pedagogies that, like historical-critical pedagogy, are committed to providing children, adolescents, and young people with access to non-everyday knowledge such as social and natural sciences, arts, and philosophy. Perhaps it is worth adding that this restriction of school content to knowledge that supposedly has immediate practical everyday applicability has political and ideological consequences that favor the efforts of the ruling class to perpetuate capitalism.

It is interesting to note that the pragmatic view of knowledge inherent in competency-based pedagogy, inspired by neoliberalism and postmodernism, is embraced by so-called “conservatives,” such as the current governor of the state of São Paulo, Tarcísio de Freitas, an avowed supporter of Jair Bolsonaro, the former president convicted in 2025 by the Federal Supreme Court for participating in an attempted coup d’état. In a recent speech, the governor expressed a view that subordinates the value of knowledge to the demands of companies:

Governor Tarcísio de Freitas (Republicanos) said on Thursday, 13, that the market is increasingly “detached” from diplomas. In the governor's opinion, higher education is losing its importance. “Diplomas are becoming less and less relevant,” he argued during an event on the expansion of technical high school education in state schools.

“The market is increasingly interested in knowing what your skills are and less in where you graduated.”

He also stated that the skills currently valued—and which enable professional advancement—are: mastery of Portuguese, “knowing how to turn big problems into smaller ones,” and speaking other languages.

“Can you communicate, do you communicate well? Because a good manager is one who communicates 90 to 95% of the time.” (Estadão Conteúdo, 2025)

Competency-based pedagogy tends to restrict access to more advanced knowledge, insofar as it decharacterizes schools and educational work, which, according to Saviani (2011), should consist of “the act of directly and intentionally producing, in each individual, the humanity that is historically and collectively produced by all of humankind” (p. 13).

The relationship between neoliberalism, postmodernism, and learning-to-learn pedagogies is not merely a discursive arrangement or a casual affinity. The movement of capital against public education (and against public services in general) is practical and concrete. Since the 1980s, capital has moved in the opposite direction to the development of public services, placing the state at the service of capital and imposing limits on government action through

political and administrative reforms aimed at the gradual dismantling and privatization of public services.

In the field of education, Freitas (2018) called this movement “Business Reform of Education,” whose goal is the total privatization of the educational system. To this end, it employs intermediate mechanisms, such as “privatization from within,” which is achieved by opening public institutions to the direct action of capital, which then acts as a “partner” of the state in the provision of services within the educational systems. This “privatization from within” occurs through outsourcing, initially of cleaning, school meals, and the provision of teaching materials—more recently advancing to the management of schools themselves, as observed in the state of Paraná (Barbosa & Alves, 2023).

An example of these privatization processes can be identified during the Bolsonaro administration (2019 to 2022), when the distribution of vouchers was proposed to meet the demand for early childhood education—a proposal that did not move forward but will certainly be revisited at a more politically opportune moment. In the model that inspired Bolsonaro, which originated in the United States,

Parents who receive vouchers distributed by the State choose their children's schools based on the quality they offer, which is certified by national assessments (Friedman, 1955; Chub & Moe, 1990). Parents are no longer users of a public service but become customers of educational companies to which they pay with the vouchers they receive. (Freitas, 2018, p. 32)

In this model, parents could add value to the vouchers they receive and thus access a higher quality school.

With regard to the formation of the individual, neoliberal ideology emphasizes the realization of what is understood as full freedom, expressed in the most developed form of interpersonal relationship: “The fundamental model of human relations in this society is the ‘enterprise’ that expresses the ‘entrepreneurship’ of human beings, constituting the source of personal and social freedom, and whose most developed organization is the ‘company’” (Freitas, 2018, p. 31).

If, on the one hand, the goal of capital is the privatization of public services, transforming them into commodities, on the other hand, direct economic means cannot be imposed without processes of manipulation of consciousness. In the case of school education, this involves the consciousness of parents, students, teachers, and other agents of the school system, as well as public opinion in general. Teachers are often fed illusory ideas about

pedagogies and methodologies that promise to facilitate educational work by transforming schools into more attractive environments for a generation of young people who are believed to be uninterested in the curriculum content. In this sense, there are promises to provide interactive teaching materials that will make the work of teachers easier and facilitate learning, preferably through the use of digital information and communication technologies.

Technicism, which at the end of the 1970s was harshly criticized and seemed to have been overcome, was reinvigorated by the development of these technologies and proved to be a strong ally of learning-to-learn pedagogies. In an environment of uncritical enthusiasm for digital information and communication technologies, the belief—in reality, a fetish—criticized by Duarte (2001) gained strength, according to which “knowledge has never been as accessible as it is today; that is, we live in a society in which access to knowledge has been widely democratized by the media, information technology, the Internet, etc.” (p. 39). In his critique, made at the beginning of this century, the author states that technological advances alone would not guarantee broader and more democratic access to knowledge. After the covid-19 pandemic, enthusiasm for technology-mediated education was reinvigorated, now under the name of education 4.0 (Previtali & Fagiani, 2022; Lopes et al., 2023).

In this model of education, which is currently advancing rapidly toward the digital platformization of teaching, uncritical enthusiasm must be confronted by analyses that consider fundamental aspects of school education—starting with the role and place of those who teach: the teachers. In neotechnicist digital pedagogy, it is necessary to question whether the activity of teaching itself remains viable. Added to this is the fact that the extreme right wing in Brazil’s parliament is seeking ways to prevent teachers from influencing students’ worldviews, as expressed in Bill No. 867/2015, the so-called *Escola sem Partido* (Nonpartisan School), which spread the idea that “teachers shall not take advantage of their captive audience of students in order to co-opt them into this or that political, ideological, or partisan current” (Brazil, 2015). This bill was deemed unconstitutional by the Federal Supreme Court, but it left its mark in terms of spreading a mentality of surveillance over schools, teachers, curricula, teaching materials, and supplementary materials, under constant suspicion of leftist indoctrination of children, adolescents, and young people.

Under the guise of a crusade in defense of the values of the “traditional Christian family,” the true goal of this new right-wing culture is to spread “belligerent obscurantism” (Duarte, 2018), which is an ideology of overt attack on science, arts and philosophy, with a consequent attitude of hostility towards intellectuals, teachers, scientists, artists, etc. It is not

surprising that ideas about education and school are increasingly widespread that, in fact, oppose the very essence of educational work and the role of the teacher as the main agent of the “socialization of systematized knowledge” (Saviani, 2011, p. 14). In this context of the decharacterization of school education, the pedagogies of learning to learn, renamed “active methodologies,” are gaining momentum, allied with the imposing rhetoric of the “modernization” of education brought about by digital information and communication technologies, with an emphasis, currently, on the mythification of artificial intelligence.

The technicista pedagogy of the 1960s and 1970s already attributed a relatively passive role to the teacher and an active role to the student, but with activities directed by educational technological resources. What we see today is a return to this principle, but in a more powerful form, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

A new stage of control over teaching and students is coming in the wake of digital technologies. It combines demands defined by the BNCC—national common core curriculum—and other bases derived from it (training of teachers and principals), teaching methods, and evaluation processes—all embedded in learning platforms, whether hybrid or not. The growing enthusiasm for the combination of technologies embedded in digital devices (mobile phones, tablets, computers, etc.) is gaining new momentum, reviving the old days of educational technology, which began in the 1970s with the old mainframes of computer centers. (Freitas, 2021)

In 1996, the National Education Bases and Guidelines Law (LDB) established the development of skills in schools as the basis for its pedagogical orientation. Subsequently, the 2017 High School Reform reinforced this guideline, adding elements of neotechnicism, by revisiting the fundamentals of human capital theory and reintroducing professional training as an alternative to completion of this level of education (Duarte & Derisso, 2017). In the same year, the enactment of the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC), which regulates and directs curriculum content, crowned a process that contributes decisively to the platformization of school education, emphasizing two basic ingredients of reforms aligned with neoliberal ideology: privatization—through the purchase of platforms by the state—and the reinforcement of fiercely competitive individualism.

This brings us to the current context of educational policies such as those adopted in education systems like those of the states of Paraná and São Paulo, from the perspective of neoliberalismo—and, additionally, the extreme right: the precariousness of teachers’ work after the suppression of previously established teaching rights, the purchase of teaching platforms

from the private sector at degrading prices, and the downgrading of school content. This has led to complaints and resistance in academic and union circles, as discussed below.

Resistance to the platformization of education and its consequences

With the closure of schools during the covid-19 pandemic, all twenty-seven federal units in Brazil adopted digital teaching platforms. Municipal systems, when they did not do so, resorted to palliative measures, such as communication via digital networks or the distribution of printed materials, with the aim of facilitating school activities carried out at home. In that context, several problems became apparent, including: difficulties in accessing the internet due to a lack of equipment and the absence or instability of internet connections, both on the part of students and the schools themselves; insufficient training of teachers; and the failure of some students to adhere to the guidelines of the education systems or schools.

This process was a milestone in the adoption of digital platforms by public education systems, even though, at that time, such platforms were used predominantly as tools to enable remote learning. However, this situation differs from what is currently observed in states such as São Paulo and Paraná, where platforms—especially in Portuguese language and mathematics—are taking on characteristics typical of the technical pedagogy of the 1960s and 1970s. This is because, to the extent that,

in pedagogy, the main element becomes the rational organization of resources, with teachers and students occupying a secondary position, relegated to the role of executors of a process whose design, planning, coordination, and control are entrusted to supposedly qualified, neutral, objective, and impartial specialists. The organization of the process becomes the guarantee of efficiency, compensating for and correcting the teacher's deficiencies and maximizing the effects of their intervention. (Saviani, 2021, p. 382)

Looking specifically at the processes of digital platformization of education in the states of São Paulo and Paraná, the main features of neoliberalism associated with digital neotechnicism in public schools are evident. One of these is the acquisition of platforms produced by private companies and the consequent transfer of public resources to the private sector. Another is the precariousness of teaching work, which, in addition to low salaries and temporary employment contracts, also faces the loss of control by teachers over the stages of pedagogical work, from planning to evaluation. A third neoliberal feature of neotechnicism is

the vision of training individuals adapted to the fluidity of the labor market, conceived as young entrepreneurs responsible for their own successes or failures. Finally, a fourth neoliberal aspect of this digital neotechnicism is the absence of any debate on the degree of responsibility of capitalism for the environmental crisis, global violence, income concentration, the crisis of democratic institutions, etc.

In Paraná, the first contract for the supply of educational platforms dates back to January 2021, signed with the company Power BI – Microsoft, in the amount of R\$ 1,143,340.00. By early 2024, 17 contracts had been signed, which together cost the public coffers R\$ 153,355,514.98 (Israel, 2024). In the state of São Paulo, after the COVID-19 pandemic period, the Secretary of Education signed the first large contract for the acquisition of teaching platforms, according to a report in the newspaper *Hora do Povo* (2023), “for more than R\$ 30.8 million” for the acquisition of “an education platform to provide video lessons and digital games without a bidding process, even though the São Paulo Secretary of Education already has a platform for the same purpose.” This contract involved the company Alura. In 2024, the Secretary reported the establishment of ten contracts, totaling R\$ 471,073,439.94 (Gepud & REPU, 2025).

In both states, there was resistance from teachers, organized mainly through the São Paulo State Public School Teachers’ Union (APEOESP) and the Paraná Public Education Workers’ Union (APP-Sindicato).

In Paraná,

Educators and students report task overload, compromised mental health, lack of structure, technical difficulties, and misunderstanding of the goals of the digital transition. According to a survey by the IPO Institute and APP-Sindicato, which represents state school teachers, 83% of educators say that the platforms have not improved learning. In addition, 72.3% say that schools do not have enough equipment to meet the goals set by the Secretary of Education. (Fernandes, 2024)

In São Paulo, meanwhile, a so-called “app strike” took place between May 13 and 19, 2024, which was in fact a boycott of digital platforms. The movement was described as follows on the *Carta Capital* website:

Around 70,000 teachers, equivalent to 35% of teachers in the São Paulo state school system, joined the so-called “app strike,” during which they will not use the digital platforms imposed by Governor Tarcísio de Freitas (Republicanos) and Secretary of Education Renato Feder. The

estimate comes from the São Paulo State Public School Teachers' Union, Apeoesp, which organized the strike between May 13 and 19 ... Education professionals question the mandatory use of various apps in the classroom and their access goals, which, according to them, has increased pressure on their work and contributed to a watering down of the curriculum. (Basílio, 2024).

Two research groups from the University of São Paulo jointly produced a technical note that had a significant impact on schools, universities, and the press, due to the accuracy of the data collected and, above all, the critical conclusions they reached about the process of platformization of São Paulo state schools. Among the main points highlighted are: the imposition of a business and technocratic logic; the systematic transfer of public resources to the private sector; the restriction of teacher and school autonomy with regard to teaching content; the adoption of centralized forms of assessment, not developed or corrected by teachers; the transformation of teachers into mere executors of pre-formatted scripts; the precariousness of teaching conditions; and the intensification of control and surveillance over students and teachers. With regard to the effectiveness of digital platforms, as measured by the results of the São Paulo State School Performance Assessment System (SARESP), the Technical Note states that “regardless of greater or lesser use of the platforms, the proportion of schools with positive, negative, or neutral results in Saresp 2024 remains virtually unchanged” (Gepud & REPU, 2025, p. 28).

Regardless of the platformization process, the deterioration of teaching conditions has been a constant in public schools, expressed largely in the precariousness of teaching work, reflected in wage squeezes and precarious forms of employment. With regard to salaries, in the 2025 salary campaign, APEOESP denounced a salary erosion due to inflation of around 25% in the period between 2009 and 2025. As for precarious forms of employment,

With regard to the employment status of teachers in the state of São Paulo, there are several categories of teachers, the three main ones being: teachers who have passed a public examination and become permanent after a probationary period (Category A); teachers who have not passed a public examination but have become permanent by virtue of the law (Category F); and teachers hired on a temporary basis (Category O). In addition to the three types of employment relationships mentioned above, temporary teachers also include those referred to as occasional teachers (Category V). (São Paulo, 2023, p. 23)

Temporary teachers substitute for other teachers and are paid only for the classes they actually teach. Category O teachers, on the other hand, are governed by temporary contracts that limit sick leave to 15 days per year and do not guarantee coverage by the State Civil Servant Medical Assistance Institute (IAMSPE), a right guaranteed to teachers in categories A and F. As of November 2023, the São Paulo State Court of Auditors recorded the existence of “207,415 active employment relationships, including teachers, principals, coordinators, supervisors, and education administrators” (São Paulo, 2023, p. 24), of which 42.9% corresponded to Category A, 11.7% to Category F, and 45.4% to Category O.

This precarious working environment contributes to increased control and surveillance of teachers, as pointed out by the Technical Note (Gepud & REPU, 2025), in the sense of forcing them to implement teaching platforms with less resistance. For almost half of the teaching staff, composed of temporary teachers, resistance to platformization becomes extremely limited. Among tenured teachers, however, resistance is more likely, as evidenced by the app strike organized by the union; however, punishments have become increasingly frequent. This can be seen in the recommendations made by the São Paulo State Public Prosecutor's Office to the state government, among which the following stand out: “Induce and ensure progressive administrative and pedagogical autonomy for schools, their teams, and communities, including with regard to the use of digital platforms and pre-produced digital material [...],” as well as the review and annulment of “punishments derived from the mandatory use of digital platforms and pre-produced digital material on education professionals, such as removal from school, loss of the position of designated principal, or the imposition of course attendance, among others [...]” (SintraMog, 2025). The very existence of these punishments, recognized by the Public Prosecutor's Office, highlights the mandatory nature of the use of digital platforms.

Final considerations

The defense of public, secular, free, and quality education in Brazil today requires, more than ever, an uncompromising fight against the authoritarian platformization of education imposed by neoliberal governments. If they could, these governments would simply do away with public services, transforming their purposes—health, education, social security, and social assistance—into products offered by the capitalist market. If they do not do so, it is because the resistance that still exists prevents them. For this reason, they resort to “internal” privatization,

with the aim of undermining the foundations and gradually ending the social gains historically achieved by workers.

This struggle is inseparable from the defense of a solid teacher training program—one that is critical of forms of labor exploitation and committed to social transformation—and from a conception of education focused on the socialization of the most developed knowledge, guided by the ideal of omnilateral training of individuals. Thus, more than ever, it is necessary to take a critical stance toward pedagogical proposals aimed at mere adaptation to the labor market and the prevailing social order.

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