

Pedagogy in the *Portal Educação*: a critical analysis based on the semiculture theory

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ABSTRACT. This text has as its object the pedagogical proposal moved by the *Portal Educação*, a company that offers online courses. Thereunto, it aims to present an analysis of the pedagogical proposal based on the Semiculture Theory. Methodologically, the work presents itself as a critical-analytical exercise, structured from the theoretical contribution of Critical Theory (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985; Adorno, 1996). The analysis is structured from the concept of Semiformation and has as its primary source of research the website of the educational company. It is theoretically and methodologically assumed that the very historical, political and economic lack of more organic processes of rupture with industrial capitalist sociability implies the production of concrete conditions for their improvement in more complex and in-depth stages from a logic with power of subjective-objective-border-control affectation of individual and collective identities. The work also indicates that the pedagogy moved by the *Portal* is affiliated to an ideal of pedagogy possible in the advanced and complex configuration of sociability at the beginning of the 21st century, therefore with a guarded fidelity to the objective of contributing to the education of materially and normatively subjects linked socially, culturally, politically and economically to that sociability.

Keywords: semiculture theory; pedagogy; *portal educação*.

Pedagogia no Portal Educação: uma análise crítica a partir da teoria da semicultura

RESUMO. Este texto tem por objeto a proposta pedagógica movimentada pelo Portal Educação, empresa de oferta de cursos *online*. Para tanto, objetiva apresentar uma análise da proposta pedagógica da empresa a partir da Teoria da Semicultura. Metodologicamente, o trabalho apresenta-se como um exercício crítico-analítico, estruturado a partir do aporte teórico da Teoria Crítica (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985; Adorno, 1996). A análise estrutura-se a partir do conceito de Semiformação e tem como fonte primária de pesquisa o *site* eletrônico da referida empresa educacional. Assume-se, teórica e metodologicamente, que a própria inexistência histórica, política e econômica de processos mais orgânicos de ruptura com a sociabilidade capitalista industrial implica a produção de condições concretas para seu aprimoramento em estágios mais complexos e elaborados a partir de uma lógica com poder de afetação subjetiva-objetiva com lastro-controle das identidades individuais e coletivas. O trabalho indica, também, que a pedagogia movimentada pelo Portal é figura filiada a um ideário de pedagogia possível na configuração avançada e complexa da sociabilidade de início do século XXI, portanto, com guardada fidelidade ao objetivo de contribuir com a formação de sujeitos material e normativamente vinculados social, cultural, política e economicamente à referida sociabilidade.

Palavras-chave: teoria da semicultura; pedagogia; *portal educação*.

Pedagogía en el *Portal Educação*: un análisis crítico a partir de la teoría de la semicultura

RESUMEN. Este texto tiene como objeto la propuesta pedagógica trasladada por el *Portal Educação*, empresa que ofrece cursos en línea. Para ello, tiene como objetivo presentar un análisis de la propuesta pedagógica de la empresa desde la Teoría de la Semicultura. Metodológicamente, el trabajo se presenta como un ejercicio crítico-analítico, estructurado a partir del aporte teórico de la teoría crítica (Adorno & Horkheimer; 1985; Adorno, 1996). El análisis se estructura a partir del concepto de Semiformación y tiene como fuente primaria de investigación el sitio web electrónico de la empresa educativa. Se supone teórica y metodológicamente que la falta histórica, política y económica de procesos más orgánicos de ruptura

con la sociabilidad capitalista industrial implica la producción de condiciones concretas para su mejora en etapas más complejas y elaboradas de una lógica con poder de afectación subjetiva-objetiva con lastre-control de las identidades individuales y colectivas. El trabajo indica también que la pedagogía movida por el *Portal* está adscrita a un ideal de pedagogía posible en la avanzada y compleja configuración de la sociabilidad de inicios del siglo XXI, por tanto, con guardada fidelidad al objetivo de contribuir a la formación de sujetos material y normativamente vinculados social, cultural, política y económicamente a la referida sociabilidad.

Palabras-clave: teoría de la semicultura; pedagogía; *portal educação*.

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Introduction

The object of this research is an educational enterprise – *Portal Educação*, which concerns the private-business expression of educational offer with flux in the Brazilian educational system, commonly interpreted by the critical perspective literature as a process of shifting education from a public good to a private rationality. It is understood, therefore, as a service regulated by financial merit; as a dismantling of educational offer as a right available as *Res Publica* (public thing); as a mischaracterization of the educational system organized from a progressive perspective of cultural promotion, ergo, emancipatory.

With faithfulness to the principle of Semiformation, based on the flow standardized by the Theory of Semiculture, as proposed by theorists of Critical Theory, here, with a focus on Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, we propose a critical and comprehensive analysis of the pedagogical conception promoted by *Portal Educação* within the scope of the current and growing complexity of sociability that is hegemonized based on the urban-industrial capitalist ideology of the beginning of the 20th century, consequently of the philosophical, social and cultural challenges arising from this model of social organization, which tends towards an instrumental rationalization, including of education, training, culture, therefore of culture as an asset of industrial capitalist sociability - cultural industry.

Thus, we assume, theoretically and methodologically, that the very historical, political and economic non-existence of more organic processes of rupture with this sociability implies the production of concrete conditions for its improvement in more complex and in-depth stages from a logic with the power of subjective-objective affectation with ballast-control of individual and collective identities. This is illustrated by the functional appropriation of culture – cultural industry –, which functionally transitions from the legitimization of the original expression of hegemony of urban-industrial liberalism to its complex reorganization as flexible urban-industrial liberalism, to the current and complex reorganization of ultraliberalism – neoliberalism.

In that regard, we announce the pedagogical proposal promoted by *Portal Educação* as a possible pedagogy, as a process of cultural formation – Semiformation and Semiculture –, deeply demarcated by a set of political-pedagogical intentions, functioning aimed at contributing to the formation of subjects materially and normatively linked socially and culturally to hegemonic sociability, now deeply marked by neoliberal political-economic agency. In other words, as a possible pedagogy in the advanced and complex configuration of a sociability managed by a set of values – ethics – hegemonic in our time.

Methodologically, the work is presented as a critical-analytical exercise, structured from theoretical contribution of Critical Theory (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985; Adorno, 1996), having as primary source the website of the educational company *Portal Educação*. The text is organized around three main exercises: in the first, we position the educational proposal of *Portal Educação* and its pedagogy; in the second, we seek to present the challenges arising from the pedagogy promoted by this Portal; and in the third one, we focus on the critical-analytical exercise from the Theory of Semiculture under the educational proposal promoted by *Portal Educação*. We also highlight that the work was developed within the scope of the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS in its Portuguese acronym) with support by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - CAPES), Financing Code 001.

Portal Educação and pedagogy

Portal Educação is a company based in São Paulo that has been offering online courses through a website since 2001¹. It covers different knowledge areas, such as administration and business, health, extra income, languages, general knowledge, commerce and industry, marketing and design, technology, engineering and construction, biology and education, with their respective subareas. The courses have different workloads, specific access periods and different prices, which vary according to market demands, duration and type of certification (Portal Educação, 2022a).

In the space entitled 'Institutional', it is stated that the Portal

[...] emerged in 2001 as the first website offering online courses in various knowledge areas. It was born from the dream of a pharmacy student, who saw the possibility of sharing scientific information and helping thousands of other students to have access to this knowledge through the internet (Portal Educação, 2022b).

Over time, according to additional information to the excerpt mentioned, other areas were covered and some partnerships with universities were made, which made it possible for the company to offer distance learning Postgraduate [specialization] courses from 2009 onwards.

'Providing knowledge', 'sharing scientific information', 'democratizing education through technology' and 'helping students' are examples of statements present on the website for accessing the courses. The statements make it seem to the reader that this is a public or even private non-profit initiative. However, on the other hand, the commercial nature is not hidden, given that all offers are accompanied by their respective prices and possibilities for discounts and/or installments. In addition, promotions are made available sporadically, an icon for accessing a sales center with telephone contact for the consulting team, the possibility of affiliation, an annual subscription plan with benefits, tips for career boosting in an e-book to attract customers and a shopping cart² for visitors.

The Education area, our object of interest in this text, has eight subareas, namely: school management, education, environmental education, religious education, school reinforcement, pedagogy, learning techniques, Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) and pedagogical and educational courses offered by Faculdade Novoeste. Due to its intrinsic relationship with education, scope and number of courses offered, we chose to examine the Pedagogy sub-area, which encompasses 85 courses³, whose themes vary between scientific research methodology, Waldorf pedagogy, educational computing, early childhood education (pedagogical theories and practices), teacher training, Braille, astronomy, playful pedagogy, career guidance, business writing, learning disabilities, andragogy, social work with families, ethics in social work, hospital recreation, theories and learning process, dynamic reading, interdisciplinarity at school, educational assessment, school class council, multiple intelligences, didactics and methodology in basic technical and technological education, theology, religious education, business pedagogy, education for the digital age, social work with families, children and globalization, development of educational projects, educator's emotional health, dyslexia in the classroom, training for caregivers of pregnant women, sexology in education, among others.

The courses are mostly short-term, with a variable workload between 40 and 80 hours and content available to the student for 30 days. After this period, access is lost; hence the importance of daily monitoring and carrying out assessment activities within the allotted time. These, in turn, are made available in the following format:

- Online Assessment of Professional Courses: 20 objective questions, which must be completed in 2 hours, a single test covering all the course content.
- Online Evaluation of Free Courses: 10 objective questions, which must be completed in 1 hour, a single test covering all the course content (Portal Educação, 2022c)

To be entitled to the certificate, the student must obtain a final average equal to or greater than 60%. However, in case of failure, it is possible to retake the test. As we can see, the company's evaluation system favors instruments that eliminate the need for human labor in monitoring and correction. Online assessments with strictly objective questions are corrected based on templates registered in systems.

However, in the reports made available to the public, it is guaranteed that the courses "[...] are dynamic and have several advantages compared to a face-to-face course", such as "'Total' study flexibility, 24 hours

¹ The Portal is available at <https://www.portaleducacao.com.br/>.

² Icon for registering products selected by a potential consumer, commonly used on commercial websites.

³ Amount raised in 2022, the time of writing this text. We do not rule out the possibility of eventual changes.

a day, with no access limits!” (Portal Educação, 2022d, author’s emphasis). The use of resources, such as “[...] animations and games (quiz type) that stimulate interactivity and interaction” (Portal Educação, 2022e) are also differentials accessible to subscribers.

It is worth noting that the company also has *Play Portal*, a platform that houses courses duly organized into categories, whose focus is professional training. The platform offers annual subscription plans called ‘Portal Play Expert’ and ‘Portal Play Estudante’ (Portal Educação, 2022f). The Portal Blog is a space for publishing texts on a wide range of areas and is open to the public (Portal Educação, 2022g).

Based on the survey carried out and the intention of investigating the way in which pedagogy is conceived by the company in question, it was possible to list some characteristics of the courses offered, establishing five dilemmas that, in our understanding, denote the contradictory nature of the institution’s values, as described on the website: “Offering quality content, [...] helping students achieve their goals, in their own time and anywhere” (Portal Educação, 2022b).

We understand that different conceptions of education, as a theoretical contribution to research, will lead to different problems, propositions and various results. Therefore, we discuss below the five dilemmas identified to subsequently attest to the semicultural nature of the training offered by Portal.

Pedagogy in *Portal Educação*: dilemmas

The term ‘dilemma’, according to the Nicola Abbagnano Dictionary of Philosophy, corresponds to a “[...] double premise [...] to indicate insoluble or convertible reasonings [...]” (Abbagnano, 2007, p. 277). Despite the synthetic description recorded here, more widely explored in the referenced dictionary, it is important to highlight, for the purposes of this text, that the courses sold by *Portal Educação*, within the Pedagogy sub-area, are characterized by a contradiction between what they propose and what they really offer.

To clarify the supposed contradiction, we will point out the five dilemmas that, from our viewpoint, denote the gap between the institution’s proposals and what it delivers to customers. They are: 1) Education presented as integrating subjects into the job market; 2) Training based on the acquisition of skills and competencies, to the detriment of learner’s appropriation of scientific concepts; 3) Lightening the educational process, presented as easy and quick; 4) Instruction sold under the logic of entertainment; and 5) Absence of the teacher figure.

Such characteristics, however, would not constitute dilemmas if the company were not committed to providing quality training to its students and to democratizing scientific knowledge. Now, a private institution can, by right, market its products, even if they are educational services aimed exclusively at professional training. What we are problematizing, therefore, is the offer of something that does not correspond to its real meaning, an increasingly common practice in the Brazilian private sector by the so-called ‘neoliberal school’, as designated by Laval (2019):

Neoliberal school is designation of a certain school model that considers education an essentially private good, whose value is above all economic. It is not society that guarantees the right to culture to its members; individuals who must capitalize on private resources whose future income will be guaranteed by society. This privatization is a phenomenon that affects both the meaning of knowledge and the institutions that supposedly transmit values and knowledge, as well as the social bond itself. The affirmation of the full autonomy of individuals without constraints, except those that themselves recognize their own free will, corresponds to institutions that seem to have no other reason for being than to serve private interests (p. 17).

From this perspective, education, further being conceived as the individual’s own duty, is presented as a criterion for their social integration. This establishes a direct link between education and the labor market, so that structural unemployment, characteristic of neoliberal societies, is ignored. Statements present on the Portal, such as “Have quick access to your profession [...]” (Portal Educação, 2022b), highlight the presence of the first dilemma, which concerns an integrative promise that is no longer sustainable (Gentili, 1998; Antunes, 2009; Frigotto, 2010), mainly through semiformalization, a concept that we explore in the next topic of this text.

Regarding the second dilemma, which deals with the formation of skills and competencies in students, we emphasize that, as Duarte (2001) rightly highlights, are in line with the ‘pedagogies of learning to learn’, of neoliberal tendency, whose common characteristic is a dissemination of illusions such as: knowledge, today, is available to everyone; mobilization of knowledge prevails over the acquisition of scientific concepts; knowledge is a purely subjective construction; there is no qualitative hierarchy between different

types of knowledge produced historically; overcoming problems of a personal and social nature can only occur through a change in individual mentalities. The approximation between the ideology propagated on the Portal and the pedagogies of learning to learn can be identified in phrases on the website, such as: “[...] With market developments, the acquisition of new skills and competencies is increasingly necessary in the professional field [...]” (Portal Educação, 2022h); “Develop skills, learn new methodologies, build a bright future” (Portal Educação, 2022h).

According to Duarte (2001), these pedagogies, in tune with ideals of the ‘knowledge society’, are illusory because they disregard the “[...] transmission of the highest and most developed forms of socially existing knowledge [...]” (p. 36) in the name of a light and superficial education, guided by merely utilitarian objectives, which leads us to the third dilemma.

We then announce the third dilemma, based on expressions such as “[...] learning in short, simplified modules with greater retention of learning by students [...]”; and “Easy and fast learning” (Portal Educação, 2022h). Frigotto (2010) and Wolff (2005) have already denounced the proposals for training and human qualification from the perspective of total quality, which tend to reify individuals and conform them, under the illusion of being incorporated into social dynamics through their own initiative and dedication.

The fourth dilemma concerns instruction sold as entertainment. We have already cited, in this work, excerpts taken from the *Portal Educação* that promise to stimulate students through games and animations. Debord (2017), in his eminent analysis of French society of his time, highlights that the spectacle, as a generalized and fetishized commodity form, exceeds pure exchange relations and is offered to boost consumption. Despite being an educational service, the product (professional training, improvement or extension courses), to be sold, must first offer attractions to the customer, beating the competition by captivating the individual accustomed to the search for agility and distractions.

Finally, the fifth dilemma that we list as inherent to the *Portal Educação* refers to the teacher’s role. The company does not have a tutoring service, and the figure of a teacher is absent, even in the courses in the Pedagogy sub-area which, as an Undergraduate course, has as its main objective as stated in Art. 2 of the National Curricular Guidelines for the Undergraduate Course in Pedagogy – Resolution N. 1, May 15, 2006 –,

[...] initial education for teaching in Early Childhood Education and in the initial years of Elementary Education, in High School courses, in the Normal modality, and in Professional Education courses in the area of school services and support, as well as other areas in which pedagogical knowledge is expected.

The same guidelines, still in their Art. 2º, § 1º, understand teaching as a “[...] methodical and intentional process, built on social, ethnic-racial and productive relations, which influence concepts, principles and objectives of Pedagogy [...]” (Law N. 10,172, 2006, p. 1), factors disregarded by the proposers of the courses available on the Portal.

As we can see, learning alone, the banner of pedagogies of learning to learn, apologists for training for development of a supposed autonomy, is assumed in its radicality by the institution – it is Pedagogy as semiculture, offered under the assumptions of semitraining.

***Portal Educação* and possible pedagogy in the context of semitraining**

Educational practices that are in flux in a period are always possible and functional educational processes that meet demands of historical and social totality characteristic of the period itself, whether these demands are specific/local and/or expanded/international in scope. Accepting this statement as valid implies recognizing, on the one hand, the limits of the idealized expression of educational processes, as a self-referential intervention capable of promoting, in itself, processes of transformation and/or correction of social deficits; and on the other hand, the impossibility of recognizing education as a process devoid of a set of political-pedagogical intentions; therefore, dialectically, it presupposes recognizing as a historically positioned process.

Portal Educação and consequently its pedagogy, are not displaced from these processes, appearing affiliated with an ideal of possible pedagogy with preserved fidelity to the objective of contributing to the formation of subjects materially and normatively linked socially, culturally, politically and economically to the sociability of the beginning of the 21st century. Thus, more than indicating that the educational proposal with flux in the *Portal Educação* is found or identified with the theoretical principle of semiculture, in it,

with a standardized flux of semiformation, it seems more pertinent to recognize it as a direct product of this ideology, in other words, as a possible pedagogy in the advanced and complex configuration of a sociability administered by a set of values – ethics – hegemonic in our time.

Semiculture here receives significance within the scope of the thought of theorists of critical theory, specifically in the thought of Adorno and Horkheimer, representatives of a group of authors linked to the so-called Frankfurt School, who, from the 1920s onwards, developed research and theoretical interventions having as their object the hegemonic affirmation of urban-industrial capitalist sociability at the beginning of the 20th century, consequently of the philosophical, social and cultural challenges arising from this model of social organization. In a direct way, this analysis seeks to base itself on the concept of cultural industry developed by Adorno and Horkheimer, in the work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1947⁴, and in the text *Theory of Semiculture*, by Adorno, published in 1959, translated in Brazil by Newton Ramos de Oliveira, Bruno Pucci and Cláudia de Abreu, published in issue 56 of the Journal *Educação & Sociedade*, in December 1996.

For Adorno and Horkheimer (1985), recognizing the historical affirmation of the urban-industrial political-economic model, with prevalence for the organizational format resulting from North American industrialism, implies linking to the theoretical tradition of Marxist thought, which when indicating the power of incidence of psychophysical adaptation of the worker in the new and more complex model of labor organization – factory –, also identifies it as incidence of psychocultural adaptation. Then, the discipline required to adapt the worker to industrial production relations is not restricted to the factory but goes beyond it and affects the very organization of social and cultural life, indicating culture itself as a capital factor – cultural industry. “It is no coincidence that the cultural industry system comes from liberal industrial countries [...]. It is true that its project originated in the universal laws of capital” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 109).

Industry becomes representative of the dominance of capital in an advanced stage of its organization, in which technique, scientific administration and control gain centrality and monopoly power of management of economically dominant groups, deepening the alienation mechanisms. According to Adorno and Horkheimer (1985, p. 113), “[...]industry is only interested in men as customers and employees and has in fact reduced all of humanity, as well as each of its elements, to this exhaustive formula”. In that regard, operating extensively within the logic of the product-consumption relationship, from management control platforms, therefore centered on technical and hyper-specialized improvement, culture perceives itself as necessary, in which “[...] each manifestation of the cultural industry reproduces people as shaped by the industry as a whole” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 105), also functional, as a strategy for affirming a model of sociability with profound objective-subjective affectation, “[...] what is recorded is the automated sequence of standardized operations. The only way to escape from the work process in the factory and office is to adapt to it during leisure time” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 113).

However, the technique – technology – here is not displaced from a certain economic function in society nowadays, in other words, from the power relations that standardize social efforts, also those of culture. “Technical rationality today is the rationality of domination itself. It is the compulsive character of society alienated from itself” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 100). Cultural formation is thus expressed as a process conducted from a set of previously defined determinants, in which the concept of formation itself is given as a technique, in which the category formation is already defined a priori, “[...] nothing that is actually called training can be learned without presuppositions” (Adorno, 1996, p. 14), transforming the ideal of cultural formation “[...] into a socialized semiformation”, operating in a restrictive way on the principle of socialization and making semiformation “the dominant form of current consciousness” (Adorno, 1996, p. 1).

For Adorno (1996), semiformation, within the scope of semiculture, responds as an adaptive reaction to the announced revolutionary culture of bourgeois sociability that operated on the promise of the inseparable and complementary articulation between experiences and concepts as an expression of the autonomy of human consciousness, moving towards functional forms of reproduction of this same sociability, liberal, industrial and centered on the market economy, as a spectrum of possible valuation for culture itself, culture as industry, as value, as a commodity standardized by semiformation. This is why Adorno (1996, p. 12) indicates as a commercial and pseudo-democratic ideology “[...] to say that technical and a higher standard of living result directly in the good of education, as this way everyone can reach the cultural”. According to Adorno (1996, p. 13), what is growing, simultaneously with the rise in living

⁴ For this text, we used the edition translated by Guido Antônio de Almeida and published in Brazil in 1985 by Editora Zahar.

standards, are “[...] demands for training as an indicator to be considered part of the upper class [...]”, which obtain as a response, in the conditions prevailing in the current market economy, the incentive for “[...] immense layers to want training that they do not have [...]”, within the framework of the logic of semiformation, of organizing oneself based on “[...] objective, reified contents with a commodity character of cultural formation” (Adorno, 1996, p. 13).

This is how the Portal presents itself as a company, enterprise, entrepreneurship of cultural flows – education –, consequently as a guarantor of the flow of a functional, adequate culture, managed by indicators of private, privatized social demand, based on a pragmatic axiology of market logic. It is worth highlighting that, in the concrete and legal-normative experience of organizing educational systems, here specifically portraying the Brazilian educational system, experiences that interrupt or extrapolate the flux of private sector in education are minimal or practically non-existent. Even the 1988 constitutionality (Brazil, 1988) does not identify conflict and validates the principle of coexistence of public and private supply, requiring only compliance with minimum ordering of supply and evaluation criteria, as recommended in its Art. 209 and its respective items I and II – “Education is free to private initiative, provided the following conditions are met: I – compliance with general standards of national education; II – authorization and quality assessment by public authorities” (Brasil, 1988).

The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB in its Portuguese acronym), formalized in Law N. 9,394, December 20, 1996, both follows the constitutional definition granting guarantees for private flows in education, and regulates the possibility of transferring public funds to private institutions, considered non-profit institutions, since, in its Art. 19, it recognizes educational institutions based on the following categories: “I – public ones, understood as those created or incorporated, maintained and administered by Public Authority; II – private, understood as those maintained and managed by individuals or legal entities under private law; III – community, in accordance with the law” (Lei nº 9.394, 1996).

This legal system also provides support for allocation of budgets from education maintenance funds to private institutions, as provided for in Decree N. 10,656, March 22, 2021, which provides for the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and the Appreciation of Education Professionals (FUNDEB in its Portuguese acronym). Item III of its Art. 2 establishes:

[...] types of establishments: a) public educational institutions; b) non-profit community, religious or philanthropic institutions that have agreements with Public Authorities; and c) autonomous bodies and foundations of indirect administration, associated or in partnership with the direct state or district administration (Decreto nº 10.656, 2021).

The objective and legal-normative difficulties of Brazilian State, regarding the interruption of the private logic of structuring the education system, in practice, reflect the very production of consensus around conservation and expanded reproduction, which impact the production of common social meaning – common sense –, validating this pedagogy as possible, adequate, necessary and in demand, which justifies its massive supply, based on packages – private logic –, both in spaces considered public and those resulting from the business organization itself. The determining factor is no longer the administrative nature of institutions, but the logic in place in the organization of the educational offer, naturally a logic better handled by businessmen, such as those at *Portal Educação*.

Thus, the announcement by *Portal Educação* that the beginning of offering courses from technological platforms, in the distance learning modality, took place in 2001 and was consolidated from 2009, offering courses in partnership with private higher education institutions in the Brazilian educational system, needs to be understood, again, in light of the legal-normative discipline for the educational offering of Brazilian State. It is not, therefore, an expertise or creative initiative of its maintainers, or even an incidence for new possibilities of educational provision, but a response-reaction as an expressive, advanced and complex movement of institutionalized processes of mass education, in the marks of cultural semieducation, especially for teacher training courses, widely explored by the mentioned private-business logic of education. In the language of Adorno and Horkheimer (1985), it implies the recognition of the function attributed to technology in the current economy.

It is possible to indicate that the mentioned initiative represents a conservative reaction and is aligned with the legal indication of item 6 of goal 11 of the National Education Plan (PNE), approved by Law N. 10,172, January 9, 2001, which makes it possible to “[...] begin, immediately after the approval of the Plan, the offering of distance learning courses at higher education level, especially in the area of teacher

education for basic education”. This legal viability is widely explored by the private sector, which enabled a shift from 100% of the offer of Pedagogy and Higher Education courses in the distance learning modality in the public sector in 2001, to 76.4% in the private sector in 2006 (Giolo, 2008; Gatti et al., 2011).

Research by Seki et al. (2019) points that this logic in the Brazilian educational system, although justified by the principle of democratizing access to education, in practice, makes it possible to shift this democratization to access regulated by financial merit – market democracy – largely private, focused on remote modalities and based on manual cultural planning processes – semiculture. This justification, loaded with a certain sense of justice and sociocultural concern, does not differ from that presented by *Portal Educação*, since it is concerned with massifying access via digital distance learning platforms as a means of producing opportunities for labor, and consequently social and cultural inclusion.

Then, the Brazilian educational system enables the production of formative processes centered on the principle of socialization of information via digital Distance Education platforms, characteristically displaced from a cultural promotion project, if not from a possible, sufficient, administered, massified culture – semiculture. “In 2003, the last year of [Fernando Henrique Cardoso] FHC government, distance learning accounted for 5.91% of enrollments. In 2007, the last year of the first Lula government, the micro data shed light on the new trend: distance learning enrollments jumped from less than 6% to 23.13% [...]” (Seki et al., 2019, p. 68). These data reaffirm the fidelity of training interventions, such as *Portal Educação*, in relation to the political-pedagogical guidelines institutionalized by the Brazilian educational system.

This ideal of training – semitraining – and culture – semiculture –, to be understood as necessary and to justify, even the willingness of social subjects to acquire it in mass, private packages, consequently by financial merit, needs to simplify, even its own spectrum of need and inclusive function in labor sociability. In other words, it is necessary to simplify the very conceptualization and experience of social praxis, linking it to the ideals and promises of a rapid link to the immediate and everyday demands of contemporary social practice, in short, to the demands of the labor market.

Social praxis, as a category ontologically linked to human activity, that is, as human praxis “[...] of a historical individual who exercises his practical activity in dealing with nature and with other men, with a view to achieving his own ends and interests, within a certain set of social relations” (Kosik, 1976, p. 9), gives way to a restrictive, fragmented interpretation, functional to the models of capital appropriation of human labor activity, therefore vulnerable to the semiformative massification processes of contemporary educational projects, such as those of the *Portal Educação*. This restricts social praxis to the direct and formal relationship between theory and practice, or even to man’s cognitive exercise over practice in an abstract way, that is, as a social practice, as a labor market.

This conceptualization even makes it possible to establish a metric for the offer of courses based on the logic of specialization, structured based on a menu of hyper-specialized offers and supposedly linked to the equally specialized-qualified demands of contemporary social practice – the labor market. If the labor market is representative of social practice in flux, consequently of institutionalized and axiologically valid form for labor inclusion, this inclusion demands specialized training, through which the offer, based on a broad repertoire of specialized courses, it responds as an expertise of the educational company *Portal Educação*.

This is how, for the Education area, the Portal, as already indicated in the text, fragments the offer based on a set of specialized courses, such as school management, education, environmental education, religious education, tutoring, pedagogy, learning techniques, Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS) and pedagogical and educational courses offered by Faculdade Novoeste. This logic enables the hyper-specialization of the offer when it is linked to sub-areas, as is the case with Pedagogy, indicating the offer of a package of courses, for instance, teacher training, art in education, children’s games and play, learning to philosophize, business pedagogy, children’s literature, child and globalization, education for the digital age, educator’s emotional health, literary genres, toy library, oral language acquisition, special education ⁵, among many others.

The conceptualization developed by Adorno (1996) on semiculture, beyond a process of cultural denial, advocates the possibility of existing socially in the complexity of contemporary sociability in a way that is displaced from culture – historically systematized human production –, is better understood by the principle of functionality of culture, as a culture regulated and functional to the reproduction of a sociability managed from external control indicators, a priori and quantifiable. In the context of educational provision, this ideology seems to be structured based on the organization of training processes focused more on

⁵ According to a survey carried out in 2022.

cultural information than on cultural promotion. Culture as information data presupposes the control of a set of indicators in advance, making it possible to regulate including the very conceptualization of educational quality.

Portal Educação indicates operationalizing these indicators well, linking and moving a proposal for educational quality of its work based on indicators of compliance with the implementation of legal determinations in flux in the Brazilian educational system – quality as an indicator of implementation of educational policies –, added to the production of indicators aligned with the provision of cultural information, capitalized social practices, optimized access through digital platforms and scripted and mass-produced teaching methods. This is a conception of educational quality capable of regulating and controlling political-pedagogical intentions that are functional to the logic of entrepreneurship in education (Freitas, 2014).

From a practical viewpoint, this discipline seems to present itself, in Brazilian educational system, as a possible and most appropriate proposal for managing the antagonistic challenge of building an education for sociocultural and labor inclusion, based on a largely private training policy centered on remote modalities, displaced from research and at the service of a policy of expanding the educational market. Therefore, the very concept of educational quality is regulated based on its performance in operationalization of semiformative principles.

The apparent dilemma identified between what *Portal Educação* proposes and the products it sells seems to be clarified when we investigate the object as a possible and functional educational process for the social and historical totality of the present moment. From this perspective, not even the contradictory use of words such as ‘democratization’, ‘quality’ or ‘knowledge’ to designate the offer of courses suited to the logic of the market in contemporary capitalist society cause surprise among the public, because in the context of semiformation, concepts take on other meanings, and as a rule, begin to serve the interests of different groups and different projects in society.

Conclusion

When investing in advertising, *Portal Educação* shows a certain conviction in offering the public a truly attractive and qualified service. The courses it sells, presented in the mentioned virtual space as widely accessible and eminently formative, are in line with the movement towards entrepreneurship in education that, in Brazil, took hold and expanded from the 1990s onwards.

As information, despite the way it is promoted in the media, culture does not aim to promote subjects through access to human production accumulated throughout history. On the contrary, it assumes the function of massifying, disciplining and expanding the possibilities of reaching the market. *Portal Educação*, as a contemporary expression of private initiative dedicated to educational market, it makes unreserved use of digital platforms and pre-established itineraries that guarantee the supposedly autonomous completion, by students, of the studies and proposed activities. That said, we affirm the presence of dilemmas on the company’s advertising page, which concern double premises that are difficult to resolve, since the services offered do not correspond to the speeches in favor of human qualification and democratization of education in the country.

‘Education’ area and its ‘Pedagogy’ subarea, with its multiple and varied courses, can be an example of the Portal’s affinity with the logic of semitraining. The courses, which are mostly aimed at the job market, essentially aim to develop skills and abilities in the individual in a quick, easy and enjoyable way, without the need for a teacher. There is no commitment on the part of the company in the syllabuses and programs to ensure that learners grasp concepts, for which the presence of teachers would be essential. In the semiculture society, as we can see, information socialized allows a certain semiformation for the integration of subjects into the environment.

Thus, social praxis is replaced by paid and specialized training for the job market, a process announced by Portal as democratic and qualified. In other words, it is rather a possible pedagogy that, under the veneer of effectiveness and entertainment, proposes the sale of information that does not tend towards human promotion.

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NOTE:

Ligiane Aparecida da Silva contributed information about the Education Portal and identified dilemmas present in the propaganda texts of the educational company, especially regarding pedagogy and training for the development of students' autonomy, creativity and critical thinking. Paulo Fioravante Giareta collaborated with an analysis of pedagogy on the *Portal Educação* based on the concept of Semiformation, seeking to problematize the identified dilemmas and highlighting the company as a figure affiliated with an ideal of pedagogy possible in the advanced and complex configuration of capitalist sociability at the beginning of the 21st century.

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