

The World Bank group as a think tank of Brazilian educational policies: questions to be discussed

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ABSTRACT. This paper is a result of a theoretical reflection on the workings of international organisations in the educational field. It focuses on the World Bank (WB) interventions on politics, and over the planning and management of Brazilian education. Due to it being, nowadays, the biggest external financier of educational projects. According to Fonseca (1998) and Santos (2017), the Bank first aid to Brazilian education was conceded during the 1960s, with its resulting project taking place from 1971 to 1978. Since then, there were more than 60 projects, dealing with tertiary to primary education, combining the workings of the WB, the Brazilian State, and the private sector. Therefore, following the theory of Social Action, we discuss this global group workings, while stating that they can be classified as those of a *think tank*. As it is, the WB goes beyond being a financing institution, as it advances towards the building of educational policies in the local context of its member-States. As a conclusion, we aim to set the foundations to an epistemological vigilance over this organisation's contemporary actions, through the perspective already presented.

Keywords: primary education; tertiary education; international organisations; theory of social action; epistemological vigilance.

O Grupo Banco Mundial como um think tank das políticas educacionais no Brasil: questões para o debate

RESUMO. O presente texto é fruto de reflexão teórica acerca da atuação dos Organismos Internacionais no campo da educação. Dá-se ênfase às intervenções do Grupo Banco Mundial (BM) no campo da política, do planejamento e da gestão da educação no Brasil. Isso pelo fato de ele se configurar na atualidade como o maior financiador externo de projetos nesse campo. De acordo com Fonseca (1998) e Santos (2017), o Banco concedeu seu primeiro financiamento à educação brasileira no final da década de 1960, tendo o projeto, advindo desse primeiro investimento, durado de 1971 a 1978. Desde então, já se efetivaram mais de 60 projetos, com financiamento para a Educação Básica e Educação Superior, que envolveram coparticipação fundiária do próprio BM, do Estado brasileiro e do setor privado. Destarte, a partir da Teoria da Ação Social (Bourdieu, 2011a, 2013) são discutidas as linhas de atuação desse organismo internacional, argumentando que suas ações podem ser classificadas como a de um *think tank*. Isto é, o BM está para além de uma instituição de financiamento de projetos em educação, pois avança em direção à capilaridade intelectual nos modos de construir e fazer política educacional nos contextos locais de seus Estados-membros. No arremate, objetiva-se lançar as bases para uma vigilância epistemológica no que tange as atuações contemporâneas desse organismo em matéria educativa, por meio da perspectiva ora apresentada.

Palavras-chave: educação básica; educação superior; organismos internacionais; teoria da ação social; vigilância epistemológica.

El Grupo Banco Mundial como *think tank* de políticas educativas en Brasil: preguntas para el debate

RESUMEN. Este texto es el resultado de una reflexión teórica sobre el papel de los Organismos Internacionales en el campo de la educación. Se enfatizan las intervenciones del Grupo del Banco Mundial (BM) en el campo de la política, planificación y gestión de la educación en Brasil. Esto se debe a que actualmente es el mayor financiador externo de proyectos en este campo. Según Fonseca (1998) y Santos (2017), el Banco otorgó su primer financiamiento a la educación brasileña a fines de la década de 1960, y el proyecto derivado de esta primera inversión duró de 1971 a 1978. Desde entonces, más de 60 proyectos, con financiamiento para la Educación Básica y la Educación Superior, que implicó la coparticipación en tierras de la propia BM, el Estado brasileño y el sector privado. Así, desde la Teoría de la Acción Social (Bourdieu,

2011a, 2013) se discuten las líneas de actuación de este organismo internacional, argumentando que su accionar puede ser catalogado como el de un think tank. Es decir, el BM va más allá de una institución que financia proyectos en educación, pues avanza hacia la capilaridad intelectual en las formas de construir y hacer política educativa en los contextos locales de sus Estados Miembros. Al final, el objetivo es sentar las bases para una vigilancia epistemológica respecto al accionar contemporáneo de este organismo en materia educativa, a través de la perspectiva que aquí se presenta.

Palabras-clave: educación básica; educación superior; organizaciones internacionales; teoría de la acción social; vigilancia epistemológica.

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Introduction

This is a work resulting from a theoretical reflection on the functioning of international institutions in shaping educational policies, planning, and administration. Its necessity stems from the centrality of these issues in research dedicated to the field of education, particularly due to the organization's historical intervention in Brazilian education, especially after the 60s.

International organizations, such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Bank Group (WB), stand out for their strategic potential, including what is known as the economy of knowledge. Consequently, we present the choice for the WB as the main object of analysis, as its actions affected from primary (mainly from 0 to 6 years) to tertiary education. By this premise, this paper's main goal is to discuss such issues, by interpreting the concept and characteristics of a specific international organ, the WB.

Such problems revolve around the idea that the WB can be considered a think tank that deals with Brazilian education. What means that, beyond its role as an economic-financial agent responsible for providing loans to make educational projects viable, it is characterized as an intellectual actor responsible for elaborating, implementing, and assessing educational policies within its authorized scope.

For an understanding of the concept of international organization

For a better understanding of the concept of International Organization (IO), the fields of political science and geography play a crucial role. These fields are the birthplace of the concept and its subsequent spread to other areas. According to Sitenfus (2005), an IO can be defined as an intergovernmental institution that is consultative and deliberative, established through formal treaties or agreements between two or more states. Its primary objective is to strengthen geographical, industrial, and commercial alliances, among other things. Furthermore, as the author states, to study what is an IO, it is necessary to refer to the convention, treaty or agreement that officially established it, while also considering its historical background.

The geopolitical aspect is central for the IO, as these alliances emerge from the international board of negotiations aimed at fostering economic growth and resolving disputes over territories for workforce exploration (Santos, 2014). On the quarrels over territories, the appearance of such international agreements came to reform the notions of subject and citizen, as such IO fight to play a decisive role over the influence on the networks of information, goods, and people within their member states.

After Santos (2017), the first IO of notice emerged after the II World War (1939-1945), during Europe's rebuilding, following its devastation during the conflict. For a better historical understanding, it is worth noting that there is also a theory suggesting that agreements leading to the creation of IOs, intending to build railways to transport food cargo and iron ore, originated in the 19th century.

But, only after the 1940s, there was a formal creation of the first IO, as the WB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), both from 1944; and the United Nations (UN), in 1945. Important to say, all of the IO can be classified in one of two categories, as of their actions: bilateral or multilateral. In the first, the agreements are made between two States and, mostly, originate from geographical questions; in the latter, the dealings happen among three or more States, that can be of different continents or geographically non-continuous.

After 1945, with the IO already organized and put to action, the international financial system suffered great setbacks resulting from their most powerful member-states, that gained power during the II World War,

influencing the weaker members in decisions that only resulted in more benefices for them. About such powerful countries, Harvey (2014) highlights the United States of America (USA) and England. Therefore, the IO member states – as the non-member ones – were classified into three categories: the developed ones, those in development, and the underdeveloped (or non-developed)¹.

Although there is no consent on such classification in scientific literature, the most accepted definition for the ‘developed’ countries is that they are those with an advanced industrialization, enabling them to generate an equally advanced technology; under the label ‘in development’, are those countries where there was plenty of raw materials and a possibility for the creation of industrial facilities; lastly, the ‘underdeveloped’ countries (or the non-developed), were those with raw materials, but lacking a qualified labor force for industrial work. The concept of ‘world periphery’ was elaborated concerning them.

Santos (2002) goes forward to an understanding that, in this ‘world periphery’, were those countries that were in development or the underdeveloped ones, namely, such States that, due to the global geopolitics, do not hold the means of production of high technology. Because of it, they have no autonomy and do not possess a higher power of choice in the international trade. The author also states that, in history, such countries were subordinated by the slavery of their populations or/and the insertion of outsourcers in the global economy – due primarily to the IO’s interference.

The field of education didn’t escape these processes. The WB slowly sought the place of biggest ‘sponsor’ of projects in this area to all its 189 member states.

International organizations and education: the case of the World Bank Group in educational matters

The theme of education started to grow in such organization’s agendas. As affirmed by Fonseca (1998, 2013), in those progovernment multilateral organizations, especially the WB, new definitions for ‘education’ were coined. They recognized that technological advancements and the growing globalization of the economy necessitated increased workforce training. These countries, often the result of colonization or neo-colonization, became the same states classified as ‘in development’ or ‘underdeveloped’ and, consequently, as global economic peripheries.

Latin America was conceived, after this material conditions, as a global periphery soon after the II World War. Santos (2002) uses the concept of ‘Global south’ to refer to such regions. These countries share a similar history, income level, education standards, and levels of inequality among their populations.

Technicist pedagogies were born under these conditions, rooted in the sophisticated reproduction of historically constituted inequalities perpetuated by capitalism.

Considering it, Brazil, the biggest State in territorial length and the one with the highest Latin American Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, is a fertile ground for the IOs interventions on education. It is worth noting that, for example, since the WB’s creation, Brazil is one of its member-states (Almeida, 2003; Santos, 2014, 2017).

The WB was created in July, 1944, along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), during the Bretton Woods conference, that took place in New Hampshire, United States of America (USA) (Carvalho, 2004; De Blasi, 2005; Borges, 2010; Pereira, 2010; Mello, 2012; Ianni, 2013; Ocampo & Flores, 2015), and had Brazil as one of its co-founders. Its first operation took place in 1946 (Pereira, 2010). In 1947, it transitioned into a specialized organization within the United Nations (UN), becoming a multilateral organization thereafter (Coelho, 2012). The emergence of the ‘Bretton Woods twins’ (IMF and WB) also marked a significant shift in the global economic axis towards Wall Street (USA), as the WB’s headquarters were located there (Bonal, 2002; Silva, 2002; Alvim, 2004; Coelho, 2012).

The organization’s initial objective was to reorganize European economies after they were devastated by World War II, in the context of the Marshall Plan (1939-1945) (Silva et al., 2005; Ascolani, 2008; Pereira, 2010; Castro, 2012). Beyond rebuilding, there was a need for an economically and financially stable international environment. (Coelho, 2012, p. 18)

Agreeing with this, Martins and Farias (2007) and Ianni (2013) argue that World War II was pivotal in the emergence of an international capital economy. The World Bank (WB) played a crucial role in this outcome by establishing itself as a multilateral organization for financial aid. Since its inception, the WB has adhered to the

¹ The three IOs mentioned here have almost identical lists of member states. Therefore, in this segment, we are referring to the classification into three categories, regardless of which IOs are cited.

‘principle of conditionality,’ allowing loans in installments. If the countries benefiting from these loans meet their specified goals within a certain timeframe, they are entitled to receive additional funds from the Bank.

In this manner, the concepts of ‘economic/financial aid’ and of ‘monetary aid’ are loaded with specific details. The first refers to short- and medium-term returns; the latter speaks only of short returns (Seitenfus, 2005). Although both contexts are noticeable, accordingly to Charlot (2007), the IMF became responsible to lend under short term conditions, while the WB works with long-term conditions.²

The WB works with such premises since its first loans to its member-states – always considering how much economic capital is available to the country in question. It clarifies that the greater the amount of capital a country has, the higher will be its chance to have a better ground in the negotiations – leading to a greater chance to have its intervention granted.

Other than ‘economic aid’, the ideological fight against communist ideals in the context of the Cold War, a crescent problem then, was another line of action followed by the Countries that lead the Bank (Pereira, 2010; Mello, 2012). The USA retained the organization’s leading posts since its creation. In such a way that to negotiate with the WB was, virtually, the same as negotiating with the USA.

Therefore, when the World War II ended, the world’s split into two economic groups, the Capitalist, and the Socialist, was heated by this organization. Obviously, carrying Wall Street’s ideals. It is also true that the WB guided some of the emergent countries to integrate the capitalist group (Silva et al., 2005).

As the Cold War went on, the World Bank went through substantial changes in its interventions, in Seitenfus words (2005). Its characteristics change varying in five different moments, each of approximately eleven years (Seitenfus, 2005). Those were: 1945-1956, 1956-1968, 1968-1980, 1980-1994 and 1994-2005. It is relevant to remember that in all of them, the organizations actions were led by the USA. Described below are the main attributes of these actions, leaning on specialized literature.

Phase of ‘1945-1956’: loans to Western Europe, intending commercial agreements in the context of the Mashall Plan. Until the 1960s, the WB coordinated strategic measures for the Cold War (Sguissardi, 2000). The first decades of the WB were marked by the definition of its multilateral identity, by the building of its institutional apparatus and of its raise in relevance over the global financial system (Coelho, 2012).

From ‘1956-1968’: assistance for Latin American industries, focusing on telecommunications, energy and transport. In the year of 1956, twelve after its creation, the WB started to lend to developing economies, especially those from Latin America. For Silva et al. (2005), the years between 1950 and the beginning of the 1970s was marked by the priority on funding the industrialization of ‘Tertiary World’ Countries.

Velho (1998, p. 152, our translation), states “[...] as in advanced countries the normative proposals come from the analysis of successful experiences, here, in the countries of this region [Latin America], the definition of strategic policies are put in first place, without a contextual analysis”.³ The governments of Mercosur countries, despite their efforts to emulate the example of countries with a history of financing industrialization policies, generally failed to consider their unique contexts. Instead, they resorted to a process of policy generation that the same author believes is inverted.

After Mello (2012), during the 1960s, a new area of action was established for the WB: technical matters for the field of education. It followed a technical and vocational trend (Espinoza, 2016). Until the 1960s, there is no example of projects and financing for the social field, which was seen with a degree of caution by the Wall Street, as it did not directly result in economic returns “[...] This aspect only changes with McNamara’s arrival [...]”⁴ (Coelho, 2012, p. 105, our translation).⁵

Between ‘1968 and 1980’, elements that stand out are: the development of projects for the fields of education and agriculture – important to say that this was a time of raise of debts from countries in development. “Fighting poverty” was highlighted in McNamara’s management and appeared as the main theme behind the grant of loans (Ascolani, 2008). During the years of 1965-1975, the WB only considered that “[...]only those who were not inserted in activities that were considered productive lived in poverty”⁶ (Pereira, 2010, p. 208, our translation).

² Silva (2002) afirma que as atuações do Banco podem ser entendidas a partir de três vertentes: a do financiamento, a de crédito e a de investimentos. Sendo todas elas operacionalizadas com dinheiro público e/ou privado.

³ In the original: “[...] enquanto nos países avançados a proposta normativa surge a partir da análise de experiências concretas bem-sucedidas, aqui, nos países da região [América Latina], coloca-se a definição da estratégia política em primeiro lugar, sem a análise prévia do contexto” (Velho, 1998, p. 152).

⁴ In the original: “[...] Esse aspecto só se altera com a chegada de McNamara [...]” (Coelho, 2012, p. 105).

⁵ McNamara was an important American politician, that worked as the USA Secretary of Defense between 1961 and 1968. For this reason, there was always doubts on his position at the WB and if it was an extension of his workings in the USA or its expansion for the whole world. It is important to note that the thesis here presented defends that there is an intended intervention over tertiary education, that is not originated from the fact that the USA are behind most of the WB’s actions.

⁶ In the original: “[...] vivia em condições de pobreza apenas quem não estivesse inserido em atividades consideradas produtivas” (Pereira, 2010, p. 208).

It also made it “[...] one of the greater responsible for the institution’s change in priorities. It grouped field visits in developing countries and went to verbalize autocratically preoccupations related to quality of life, such as with education [...] [and] nutrition” (Maffra, 2011, p. 44, our translation)⁷. The question to be made is: how high is the level of acceptance of such ‘authoritarianisms’ in each of these countries?

It can be stressed about the 1970s that the WB worked for the building of what is known today as ‘neoliberalism’. Thile it was also focused on elaborating this project of reform to answer the crisis of the Welfare State, suggesting it as a model to replace the latter (Sguissardi, 2000; Harvey, 2005, 2014; Costa, 2006) in the central capitalist countries. Chiefly after projects that included market expansion and the making of national stock exchange in the international market. In Ianni’s words (2013),

There [in neoliberalism] are born the guidelines related to decentralization, deregulation, privatizing, liberalization and regionalization. Those are guidelines mainly codified, shared, implemented and administrated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). While neoliberalism was supported by the principle of national sovereignty, or at least used it as a parameter, it ultimately crossed it, reallocating the possibilities of sovereignty for organizations, corporations, and other global entities (Ianni, 2013, pp. 100-101, our translation)⁸.

It is only in the turning of the 1970s to the 1980s that primary education and health became part of the WBs concerns, justified by them being weapons to ‘relief absolute poverty’, but not to end it (Pereira, 2010). As a trend of its actions on education, it started to claim that primary education would offer a better outcome for the population (Espinoza, 2016).

Along the years between ‘1980 to 1994’: policies of adjustments with macroeconomic impact; and the mitigation of social tensions. Some of the tensions happened due to changes in employment policies, as they were shifted with the advance of capitalism.

It is relevant to remember that the WB wouldn’t be an actor *factótun* of the policies – that is, with a central role. But, due to its global stance of financing and attachment to the neoliberal global financial system, the member states’ governments trusted it to take them out of the ‘crisis’. With the naming of Alden Winship Clausen to lead the WB (in 1981, until 1986), “[...] the Bank’s doctinary and operational center began to be the promotion of neoliberal emphasis” (Pereira, 2010, p. 246, our translation)⁹. As Robertson (2012) states

From the 1980s on, relevant international agencies, as the World Bank Group (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), worked in a role that was ever more instrumental in the global promotion of free market ideas from the Chicago School (Robertson, 2012, p. 286, our translation)¹⁰.

According to Sguissardi (2000), the decade of 1990 in Latin America was marked by the WB guidance to the building of a neoliberal concept of market through what was called the Washington Consensus. “The consent signified the end of Washington’s tolerance with economic nationalisms in the world, as the advance of the capital over the grouping of social and labor rights from the post war period” (Pereira, 2010, p. 274, our translation)¹¹.

The Washington Consensus resulted from the union of the leader of the WB, the IMF, the IDB, and Usaid, the United States Department of the Treasury and the most relevant American think tanks (Bonaf, 2002; Charlot, 2007; Pereira, 2010; Harvey, 2014). It was compiled by John Williamson and is one of the historical translations of the neoliberal project (Pereira, 2010; Puello-Socarrás, 2013). Also, Teodoro (2008) adds that, in the years after the 1980s,

[...] the development changes from a project able to be driven by the Nation State, based on traditional stimulus to the national market, to increasingly need the global market, by the guidance of a ‘global managerialism’ that has, in the so-called ‘Washington Consent’ its ten commandments: fiscal discipline, spending priorities, tax reform, financial liberalization, exchange rates, trade liberalization, foreign direct investment, privatization, deregulation and property rights (Teodoro, 2008, p. 25,our highlights and translation)¹².

⁷ In the original: “[...] um dos principais responsáveis pela mudança de prioridades da instituição. Ele aglomerou, em um grupo, visitas de campo aos países em desenvolvimento e foi autoritariamente verbalizar reocupações referentes à qualidade de vida, tais como educação [...] [e] nutrição” (Maffra, 2011, p. 44).

⁸ In the original: “Ai [no neoliberalismo] nascem diretrizes relativas à descentralização, desregulação, privatização, liberalização e regionalização. São diretrizes que principalmente o Fundo Monetário Internacional (FMI) e o Banco Mundial (BIRD) encarregam-se de codificar, divulgar, implementar e administrar. Enquanto o liberalismo baseava-se no princípio da soberania nacional, ou ao menos tomava-o como parâmetro, o neoliberalismo passa por cima dele, deslocando as possibilidades de soberania para as organizações, corporações e outras entidades de âmbito global” (Ianni, 2013, pp. 100-101).

⁹ In the original: “[...] o centro doutrínario e operacional do Banco passou a ser, decididamente, a promoção do enfoque neoliberal” (Pereira, 2010, p. 246).

¹⁰ In the original: “Dos anos 1980 em diante, importantes agências internacionais, como o Grupo Banco Mundial (BM), o Fundo Monetário Internacional (FMI) e a Organização para a Cooperação e o Desenvolvimento Econômico (OCDE), atuaram num papel cada vez mais instrumental na promoção global das ideias de livre mercado da Escola de Chicago” (Robertson, 2012, p. 286).

¹¹ In the original: “No conjunto, o consenso sintetizava o fim da tolerância de Washington com o nacionalismo econômico pelo mundo afora e o ataque do capital contra o conjunto de direitos sociais e trabalhistas forjados no pós-guerra” (Pereira, 2010, p. 274).

¹² In the original: “[...] o desenvolvimento deixa de ser um projecto capaz de ser conduzido no quadro do Estado-nação, na base dos tradicionais estímulos ao mercado nacional, para depender cada vez mais do mercado mundial, sob a condução de um ‘gerencialismo global’ (‘global managerialism’) que tem no chamado ‘consenso de Washington’ os seus dez

During the years comprising from '1994 to 2005': there is a planning of programs directed towards underprivileged classes of member states, focusing specially on fighting poverty (Altmann, 2002). It is clear in Ianni's point (2013) that at the same time as there is a process of capital globalization, there is also a development of "[...] globalization of the social question" (Ianni, 2013, p. 63, our translation)¹³.

In this point of the WB's history, reforms leading to economic opening took place, along with the deregulation and privatization of public sector, still as results of the Washington Consent. During those years, the organization also created measures turned to the sustainable development (Seitenfus, 2005).

With emphasis on development, Coelho (2012) points four great activities agendas through the WBs history. In his ordination, he points to the prevailing tendency in the organization rulling agents. In his words, the first, 'identity and consolidation', went from the president Eugene Meyer to President George Woods; the second, 'expansion', during Robert McNamara's management; the third, 'severance', from Alden W. Clausen to Barber Conable administrations; and, lastly, 'reformulation', in following managements. Once political changes with macroeconomic content, taking place since the end of the 1980s, didn't settle such problems, but worsened them – what was proved by the diminishing GDPs of most of the poor countries, accompanied by the rise in unemployment and famine rates.

Then, the WB released a document titled *After the Washington Consent: the relevance of institutions* (Sguissardi, 2000). Ten years after the Consent, when the document was released, the fact that the design of policies didn't take into account the socioeconomical characteristics of countries where they were implemented is obvious. They only considered the countries' economies, what lead to economic reductionisms (Coraggio, 1996 cited by Sguissardi, 2000). For Coelho (2012), the restructuring plan for Latin America expressed in the Washington Consent brought into light many of the economies that invested on the program.

When the neoliberal reforms didn't work, the WB started to use Latin America as an example of "inconclusive adjustment" (Pereira, 2010). It is worth remembering that the WB is also "[...] constituted as the Only multilateral institution in the public sector with abundant resources that acted over the Whole world in development and in multiple development questions [...]" (Maffra, 2011, p. 42, our translation)¹⁴.

The WB had three important goals between the years of '1994 and 2000'. The first one was to back reconstruction and economic development projects of its member states, stimulating their means of production; the second was to raise economic balance in a medium and long term, increasing productivity and quality of life; and, the last one, was to provide good work conditions – inside the new international demands – in its member states territories (Solé, 1995).

These goals would be achieved through the WB loans to public and private business, and through the dispatch of technicians and specialists to evaluate the situation of each nation (Sguissardi, 2000). By such evaluation, these professionals would develop plans to answer the problems and, doing so, the WB would contribute to the formation of qualified workers to resolve specific questions (Sguissardi, 2000).

For Altmann (2002),

Although the IBRD credit policy [in reference to the WB] for education is self-named cooperation or technical assistance, it is nothing more than a co-financing with a conventional kind of loans, as showed by the heavy burdens that it forces and the solidity of the rules and financial requisites natural in the process of commercial financing (Altmann, 2002, p. 79, our translation)¹⁵.

Through an analysis of the World Bank's work from 2005 to 2019, it becomes evident that its policies have consistently aligned with its primary objectives. These objectives encompass economic development that aims to reduce extreme poverty, particularly in women's education. Additionally, the World Bank emphasizes economic development that prioritizes socio-environmental considerations, aiming to protect the environment of its member states and reduce CO2 emissions. Furthermore, the bank focuses on economic development in African and South American countries, empowering women through education. Lastly, the World Bank actively works against racial discrimination (World Bank Group, 2011; World Bank Group, 2018).

mandamentos: disciplina fiscal, prioridades na despesa, reforma fiscal, liberalização financeira, taxas de câmbio, liberalização do comércio, investimento estrangeiro directo, privatização, desregulação e direitos de propriedade." (Teodoro, 2008, p. 25, grifos do autor).

¹³ In the original: "[...] internacionalização da questão social" (Ianni, 2013, p. 63).

¹⁴ In the original: "[...] se constitui como a única instituição multilateral no setor público e com recursos abundantes que interveio em todo o mundo em desenvolvimento em diversas questões de desenvolvimento [...]" (Maffra, 2011, p. 42).

¹⁵ In the original: "Embora a política de crédito do BIRD [referindo-se ao BM como um todo] à educação se autodenomine cooperação ou assistência técnica, ela nada mais é do que um co-financiamento cujo modelo de empréstimo é do tipo convencional, tendo em vista os pesados encargos que acarreta e também a rigidez das regras e as condições financeiras e políticas inerentes ao processo de financiamento comercial" (Altmann, 2002, p. 79).

All past presidents in the history of the World Bank were North American, born in the USA. But, although all of them were pointed by the USA, it is necessary to point that throughout the years, more than one party was responsible for the country's management: it was split between the Republican and the Democrat parties. What means more than one political orientation (Coelho, 2012) – and, consequently, of social views – characterizing the most relevant political player of the WB.

David Rober Malpass, an economist formed by the Colorado College and the Denver University, is the WB president since the April 5th of 2019. Before it, he was the Under Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs, as informed by the Bank website. The WB

[...] He is more than 'its president, and he doesn't rule its actions guided only by his preferences'. His world view also has a relevant impact, but it 'is conditioned' by his early life, his professional origin, 'by' 'nationality and by the relations that he established during his mandate' (Coelho, 2012, p. 68, our highlight and translation)¹⁶.

The line 'economic development' marks, without question, the WB propositions. Its study can't be conducted without a comprehension of the dynamics of international capital and, specially, the relationship between different powers and the peoples in development. Therefore, the debate over the role of big regional powers as leaders in the diminishing of economic conflicts between countries of their groups is put to light, in the same way as their role to attend peoples of countries living below the line of poverty.

In one way or another, the Bank protects a favorable trade balance via a percentual of unemployment and capital surplus. It is true that this organization position results from ideological disputes and contradictory positions on the economic field and on another fields where it is located.

On the interactions between the IOs and central countries, Ianni (2013, p. 245, our highlight and translation) argues that "[...] the international organizations 'grouping regionalisms and globalism', work by prioritizing the interests of those nations with more economic, political, military and cultural power"¹⁷. For Coelho (2012), the internal relations in the WB reflect the geopolitical movements among the global states, including market competition.

In Sguissardi (2000) and Pereira's (2010) understanding, the WB do not detour from what the developed countries follow as their economic strategy and as a better option for the world's development. But it do not ignore that there. Are points to be made on the economic and academic-scientific potential of those countries that negotiate with the WB¹⁸.

In order to have a better administrative control, the WB divides its operative extension into six macroregions: (1) Africa, (2) East Asia and Pacific, (3) Europe and Central Asia, (4) Latin America and Caribe, (5) Middle East and North Africa and (6) South Asia. Such division is made for the WB considers economic aspects over cultural ones. Nowadays, the WB is configured as World Bank Group because it is made of five institutions: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA); the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) (Santos, 2017).

The WB is introduced among such organizations, when it was funded in 1944 and started operating in 1946 (Pereira, 2010) and became the biggest multilateral organization in the financing of educational projects (Espinoza, 2016). As stated by Castro (2012, p. 554, our translation), multilateral banks aren't only "[...] simple banks [...]", but also "[...] credit cooperatives – in which only the members can receive loans [...] [they are true] credit cooperatives from the participating countries [...]"¹⁹, also called member states.

The World Bank's first educational loan was directed towards Tunisia in 1963 (Reis, 2001). Its first loan for tertiary education was made to Bangladesh in 1964 (World Bank Group, 2000), although the World Bank Group later claimed that it had occurred in 1963 (World Bank Group, 2016). The first educational Latin American project was financed in 1968, focusing on Nicaragua's primary education, including the construction and equipping of schools. The first World Bank loan for a Latin American tertiary education project was made to Peru. However, as it is now considered 'abandoned', there is no date for it on the bank's website. When considering projects that were not only started but also concluded, the first one was also in Peru, but it appears

¹⁶ In the original: "[...] é mais que 'seu presidente, e este não comanda suas ações a partir simplesmente de suas preferências'. Sua visão de mundo tem peso importante, mas 'está condicionada' pela vida pregressa, pela origem profissional, 'pela' 'nacionalidade e pelas relações travadas no exercício do mandato'" (Coelho, 2012, p. 68, grifo nosso).

¹⁷ In the original: "[...] as organizações internacionais, 'compreendendo regionalismos e globalismos', exercem suas atividades priorizando interesses de nações com maior poder econômico, político, militar e cultural" (Ianni, 2013, p. 245, grifo nosso).

¹⁸ Pereira (2010) makes a similar point, while dealing with the USA's influence inside the WB, since its creation in 1944. However, the author emphasized the USA's role and do not specifically discuss the possibility of the states to deal by their geopolitical position.

¹⁹ In the original: "[...] cooperativas de crédito – nas quais apenas os membros podem fazer empréstimos. [...] [são verdadeiras] cooperativas de crédito dos países participantes [...]" (Castro, 2012, p. 554).

to have no relation to the aforementioned ‘abandoned’ project. The 1982 project aimed to restore and rebuild the central campus of Universidade Agrária Nacional La Molina, which had been devastated by an earthquake in 1974.

As noted by Pereira (2010), the World Bank operates in two ways. One is through persuasion, involving dialogue with government officials and providing technical assistance in project-related fields. The other is through coercion, which is considered the primary means of exerting its influence and can even lead to blocking loans that have already been granted.

According both with Fonseca (1998) and Santos (2017), the first of the Banks loans to Brazil was conceded in the end of the 1060. In such context, the project was directed towards an “vocational education”, looking to engage the population in the new industrial demands. The project resulting from this first loan took from 1971 to 1978. Since then, there were other 60 projects, both for basic and tertiary education, with the involvement of the WB, along with the Brazilian State and the private sector.

With it in mind, we resort to the Theory of Social Action (Bourdieu, 2011a, 2013) to defend that the WB, in participating on educational projects, plays more than only the role of financier, but also of helper of the building of new conceptions on the idea of education operated by its partner State, that is, Brazil. Then, it can also be labelled as a *think tank* for Brazilian education. What is only possible by the fact that the educational field is crossed between internal and external disputes on the capital, what enhances the position of agents and corpus with more power to influence such disputes.

Agents, Corpus and the field of action of the World Bank Group

By the premise that scientific objects are elaborated in a methodologically structured manner, it can be pointed that, in the humanities, there is a thin line between a scientific and a common knowledge. That is why such phenomena cannot be understood without a epistemological surveillance (Bourdieu et al., 2015). There comes the need for “[...] technical weapons, based on research and scientific works, and symbolic weapons, fit to shake common beliefs, giving sensitive form to research acquisitions” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 58, our translation)²⁰.

This research is funded on a broader theory developed by thinkers from Educational Sociology. Among them, we particularly highlight Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) and his collaborators to discuss our primary focus: the actions of the World Bank in Brazilian education.

Bourdieu’s theory can be considered a theory of social fields, but it is also known as the Theory of Social Action. Developed in the second half of the 20th century, it views society as a place of conflict between specific segments, vying for the accumulation and monopolization of various forms of capital.

Medvetz (2008) defines social space (macrocosm) as the entire social system composed of multidimensional systems (fields) organized at different levels of authority. These fields have their own means of arrangement among their groups and individuals, and they are invested with functions within a relational system of competition and conflict. The key traits of a corpus are that it is part of a field, there are relations of competition and conflict within it, and the groups that make it up can exhibit differences in specific aspects (Bourdieu, 2011a, 2013).

While each analytical level has its own relevance, this work is not only based on the habitus²¹ of specific agents but also on the corpus and its influences inside the educational field. The corpus agents reach each other via relations of economic and cultural capitals (Bourdieu, 2011a). Namely, for the present analysis, the agents of the Brazilian State can be chosen as a corpus that maintains economic relations with the corpus set by the WB to be responsible for the educational policies formulated.

Nevertheless, although the field, as a microcosm, possesses its own characteristics and a certain degree of autonomy, it still adheres to the principles of the macrocosm (Bourdieu, 2004, 2011a). Within this field, specific discourses with relative authority are produced, and their authors must adhere to certain rules to be considered legitimate members. One such rule is the pursuit of a discourse that maintains the ‘science effect’ (Bourdieu, 2011b), aligning with the logic of classification, declassification, and reclassification of the corpus formed by these agents/actors (Bourdieu, 2013).

²⁰ In the original: “[...] armas técnicas, fundadas na pesquisa e no campo dos trabalhos científicos, e armas simbólicas, próprias para abalar as crenças comuns dando forma sensível às aquisições da pesquisa” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 58).

²¹ *Habitus* can be understood as “[...] a system of social dispositions elaborated that, as structured structures that also create structures, constitute the generating principle that unifies the grouping of practices and ideologies characteristic of a group of agents. Such practices and ideologies can be updated in occasions more or less favorable that enable them with a position and trajectory determined inside an intellectual field that, as it is, occupies a determined position in the dominating class structure” [In the original: “[...] sistema das disposições socialmente construídas que, enquanto estruturas estruturadas e estruturantes, constituem o princípio gerador e unificador do conjunto das práticas e das ideologias características de um grupo de agentes. Tais práticas e ideologias poderão atualizar-se em ocasiões mais ou menos favoráveis que lhes propiciam uma posição e uma trajetória determinadas no interior de um campo intelectual que, por sua vez, ocupa uma posição determinada na estrutura da classe dominante”] (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 191, our translation).

Bourdieu (2001) states that there are fields obeying their own rules, other than that of the economic field, as they would not be compatible with the Market's logic (Bourdieu, 2001). This means that: "[...]the more the scientific fields are autonomous, the higher is their chance of escaping external social laws" (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 30, our translation)²². The Field's capacity of refracting events is a clear demonstration of its relative autonomy (Bourdieu, 2004). But, even if the field can have a great power of refraction, its internal events never cease to be in relation with its external ones and, in a way, they are in a strict relation of dependence (Bourdieu, 2011a).

Consequently, there are individuals, groups and different categories into the fields, battling each other to dictate the rules of belonging. The winners of such battles acquire the right to monopolize the 'true' on specific estates. Bourdieu (2011a) considers that the truth is a fighting place and, in the fields, as social universes, such truth is the target to be achieved for the winning group to achieve the rule of the sharing of the social world.

Corresponding the ideas here presented, it is believed that the WB counts on groups specialized in education. Those agents, more than being technicians focused on surveillance and monitoring, are true mentors behind the projects signed by the WB. Santos (2017) explains that it is necessary that there be members from the national context of the State holding the project in the corpus, because in this manner there would be a closer approach to state capital.

Then, the power of influence of those agents over the delineation of education projects are palpable. Those agents integrate the corpus with a refraction capacity for arguments contrary to the WB ideals. By such understanding, it is possible to claim that the WB enacts a role of *think tank* in Brazilian education.

The World Bank Group and the elaboration of educational policies

Bourdieu (1998) argues that arguments against the ideal of limited government should be presented chronologically to allow the reader to logically sequentially review the already criticized facts. The author further elaborates on this concept, suggesting that the critic's arguments evolve and change over time, influenced by the specific space-time context. Therefore, it is noteworthy that the documents to be studied are arranged chronologically, as the analysis should also consider the historical context of each epoch in which they were published.

If we are to accept the thesis that a linguistic doxa demonstrates where the neoliberal core is located, we are, consequently, agreeing with the idea that there is a sense in the lexicon dedicated to the defense of such paradigm. Thence, based on Bourdieu's (2001) works, we deem some categories related to the dominant economic discourse as: 'the economy is in a process of globalization, then it is necessary to make it global', 'the things are changing quickly, therefore it is needed to change', 'if capitalism prevailed everywhere, it was because it is inscribed into men's deepest nature', 'it is by creating riches that we can generate employment', 'too much taxes can kill taxes', 'the welfare state and an employment security belongs to the past', 'how can one still defend the idea of public service?', 'more market equals more equality', 'to restructure businesses', and, 'equality condemn thousands to poverty'.

Nevertheless, the author states that there are words of order combining those categories, that are: deregulation, voluntary unemployment, freedom of exchange, free capital circulation, competitiveness, creativity, technological revolution, economic growth, fight inflation, to lower the State's debts, diminishing labor costs, reducing social expenditures, among many others. In addition, in Bourdieu's (2001, p. 96, our translation) view, such terms are "[...] ready notions or phrases, almost indetermined semantically, banalized and polished by the wear resulting from long-term automatic use, that work as magic formulas, repeatedly multiple times because of their magical value"²³.

The concerning literature show that the 'words of order' described above are common in neoliberal institutions (Ball, 2001, 2006). For Bourdieu (2001), the North American neoliberal model is based on three basic assumptions: (1) that economy is an autonomous domain, (2) that market equalized production and (3) that globalization demands that social rights are decreased (such as employment and social inequality). But we cannot forget that neoliberalism originates from intellectuals – it is a planned theorization, contrary to the thought that it would be a product of human basic needs (Bourdieu, 2001).

²² In the original: "[...] quanto mais os campos científicos são autônomos, mais eles escapam às leis sociais externas" (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 30).

²³ In the original: "[...] noções ou locuções todas prontas, semanticamente quase indeterminadas, banalizadas e polidas pelo desgaste de um longo uso automático, que funcionam como fórmulas mágicas, incansavelmente repetidas por seu valor encantatório" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 96).

When we focus on the field of education, it gets clear that those new ways of management result into notions of competition, solidifying what Bourdieu (1998) calls “new ways of domination”: for example, the *management*. As argued by Ross (1998, cited by Bourdieu, 2001), in it, productivity and efficacy are associated to a ‘strong flexibility’ (counterbalancing ‘social security’), resulting in contexts where the training of ‘more productive and efficient’ workers is naturalized, due to policies of collective instability.

In Bourdieu’s (1998) understanding, the State is an ambiguous reality, as it does not serve only to the interests of the ruling classes. Then,

The State results from a concentration process of different kinds of capital, physical force capital or coercion tools (army, polices), economic capital, cultural capital, or better, information, symbolic capital, a concentration that, as it is, gives to the State the hold over a kind of *metacapital*, with power over other kinds of capital and those who detain them (Bourdieu, 2011a, p. 99, our translation)²⁴.

Therefore, into a bourdieusian view, we think it is necessary to study in detail the situations, as well as the institutions, as they allow guidance for specific procedures and the refusal for other ones. In Bourdieu’s (1998) work, the specialists from the WB and the IMF are not worried in ‘negotiating’, but in ‘explaining’ how their policies would be established. However, by considering the Brazilian scenery, one can see that the said ‘explanations’ find support on local ruling elites.

The projects of those institutions are not imposed but redefined in an attempt of combining global interests with national political desires. Here, we follow Santos (2017), for whom there are alliances between the longings of Brazilian elites involved with the private sector and the WB, aiming the making and definition of the goals of educational policies.

There are expectations created around proposals of educational policies that would or not grant them popularity. Other than a high (or well invested) economic capital, there is need for an investment in symbolic capital, as it will cover the project with an authority necessary to execute the action, with preeminence over other possible policy alternatives. In this sense, the symbolic capital would be based on the knowledge and recognition of the legitimacy of such measures for its place of application.

Bourdieu (1998) also deals with the economic reality, through the dynamics that are established on the global market. To do so, the author brings to light the ‘structure of the global economic field’, that, according to him, is set by the inequalities based on the power of distribution of riches attained by the countries. The author also comes from an idea that there is a social conflict among the corpus, promoted by the inequality of capital distribution.

Hence, having established the existence of the fields, where there are multiple corpus, it can be hypothesized that: in the economic field there are global organizations with different areas of actuation, and the WB is one of them. Thus, there are various specialists (agents) inside the WB that are responsible in formulating its policies together with its member states. One of those policies is the educational. This ‘thinking over educational policies’, proposing ideas and guiding them, characterized its classification as a think tank.

Clearly, it is the State who legitimizes the actions of the corpus (Bourdieu, 2011a), conferring them with relative authority to act inside the fields. Each of the corpus have its own interests, that can be ‘uninteresting’ to the other fields (Bourdieu, 2011a). If it is thought that a public, free and high-quality education is not interesting for the economic field, such educational model will be discredited in WB documents related with the field. The central problem, therefore, is to know what falls into the category of ‘uninteresting’ for the WB, in its position as a think tank over Brazilian educational policies.

The World Bank Group as a think tank in Brazilian education

Bourdieu (2001, p. 34, our translation) defines think tanks as being “[...] consultancy business that analyze problems and give solutions in the military, social and political fields”²⁵. The concept is originated in the military context, as it was originally attributed to secret rooms used for strategy formulation (Rigolin & Hayashi, 2013). The area of research on their workings is wide and there is still a lot to be explored – specially on the question of the contributions of *think tanks* from the Social Sciences, Applied Social Sciences and the Humanities (Rigolin & Hayashi, 2013).

²⁴ In the original: “O estado é resultado de um processo de concentração de diferentes tipos de capital, capital de força física ou de instrumentos de coerção (exército, polícia), capital econômico, capital cultural, ou melhor, de informação, capital simbólico, concentração que, enquanto tal, constitui o Estado como detentor de uma espécie de metacapital, com poder sobre os outros tipos de capital e sobre seus detentores” (Bourdieu, 2011a, p. 99).

²⁵ In the original: “[...] empresas de consultoria que analisam problemas e propõem soluções nas áreas militar, social e política” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 34).

The contemporary concept dates from the beginning of the 20th century, in North American politics, to refer to state technicians that were hired to elaborate government policies. But it is only in the 1960s that the word began to be used also for private institutions (Rigolin & Hayashi, 2013). The *think tanks* are “[...] power plants of ideas” (Henry, 2001 cited by Rizvi & Lingard, 2012, p. 532, our translation)²⁶.

For Medvetz (2008) *think tanks* cannot be thought as being independent and autonomous, but they need to be considered historically as products of universities (ex.: The Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences – Stanford University), or of the State (ex.: RAND Corporation – U. S. Air Force), and of Business (ex.: Douglas Aircraft Company). Therefore, there are both governmental and non-governmental *think tanks* (Rigolin & Hayashi, 2013).

Such traits result in one affirmative: that the field of *think tanks* is hybrid, as they are, at the same time, dependents on the institutions that generated them, and force relations are developed with agents from external fields. That is, the academic kind can be fused with those backed by business interests to gain more visibility, for example (Medvetz, 2008).

In this way, Medvetz (2008) points that the *think tanks* fight between themselves for supremacy and more power of influence over the social space, inside their own fields. Then, they are synonymous with “[...] relations among intellectuals and power” (Rigolin & Hayashi, 2013, p. 6, our translation)²⁷. The *think tanks* are in frontiers and are invested of intellectual authority, what differs them from the lobbies, politicians and advocacy groups (Rigolin & Hayashi, 2013), thence, they follow their own rules (conventions, legislation) and are constantly suffering advances from all other fields (Medvetz, 2008).

Medvetz’s (2008) idea posits that *think tanks* are hybrid entities occupying an intermediary structural position. In essence, their identity is shaped by the partnerships they establish, which can inadvertently favor aspects of an economy rooted in state or mercantilist ideals. Moreover, Rigolin and Hayashi (2013) argue that think tanks operate within a space that bridges the gap between the academic and governmental spheres, leading to conflicts for control over academic and state capitals.

By thinking that the agents from various fields have cognitive structures²⁸ that enable them to be part of it, and by the fact the field of the think tanks are in the intersection between diverse fields, it can be concluded that such agents meet the cognitive needs specific to each of the *think tanks* next to their own field (Medvetz, 2008).

There are many *think tanks* that deal with education. Examples follow: the World Trade Organization (WTO), UNESCO and the OECD (Henry, 2001 cited by Rizvi & Lingard, 2012, Azevedo, 2006); and, specifically in Brazilian soil, the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IAER) (Rigolin & Hayashi, 2013).

Castro (2012) presents the WB as a grouping of characteristics that identifies it as a think tank – although he does not use such a concept. By deepening this view, we support the idea that the WB is also a *think tank*, as it acts as a space to supply conceptions and an advisory service to specific models of education.

Moreover, more than being an advisor for educational matters, the WB also finances projects. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that this organization is not a private institution, but a result from treaties between States that, according to the bank, want to promote a poverty relief in a global level – what doesn’t mean that it cannot be considered as a *think tank*.

By employing the analytical approach presented here, the World Bank can be regarded as a think tank collaborating with Brazilian education. This partnership facilitates the formulation of policies aimed at enhancing administrative practices in the education sector by local, state, and federal governments. Beyond solely formulating policies with local government consent, the World Bank actively contributes to the collaborative efforts of other think tanks by disseminating research data. For instance, its annual global economic reports provide valuable insights and data that are accessible to these think tanks.

Final thoughts

The State agents grant of control of institutionalized cultural capital to the WB thinkers can signify: (1) the administration of education through a business bias, (2) the privilege of inputs of pedagogical work over teachers and students, (3) the outsourcing of education workers, supplementing contracts via open tendering, (4) the weakening of teaching category and (5) the disregard for rights conquered by scholar subjects, as the

²⁶ In the original: “[...] usina de ideias” (Henry, 2001 citado por Rizvi & Lingard, 2012, p. 532).

²⁷ In the original: “[...] relações entre intelectuais e poder” (Rigolin & Hayashi, 2013, p. 6).

²⁸ In Bourdieu’s (2001) definition.

Carrer Plan and a consistent remuneration to the contextual necessities of the place where the teaching takes place (materialized, generally, in an area-specific law).

Bourdieu (2001a), when speaking about the agents, asserts that a good player is not below or over the time of the game, but he anticipates it (recognizing what is going to happen) inside social relations. By the notion that “[...] the field is a game where the rules are put in play [...]” (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 29, our translation)²⁹. In the game of capital relations and, mostly, of domination of scholar capital, the corpus is organized to know what in the disputes is predictable. Therefore, in corpus level, the strategies to come are perceptible on the making of arrangements of cultural, social and economic capitals, enabling the fields length in its field.

In our understanding, the World Bank (WB) can be classified as a corpus primarily located in the economic field, but with some of its actions extending to the educational field. Consequently, its functions as a think tank have been adapted to the Brazilian educational field, providing the opportunity for governmental agents that hire it to be the first to think about education.

Therefore, it is evident that the WB can also be understood as a corpus that allows for the discussion of Brazilian education without imposing its views, but rather challenging local administration interests that prioritize neoliberal goals in the field of education. Notably, the WB is actively involved in policy formulation for the administration of Basic Education, which is aligned with neoliberal objectives.

In light of the context presented, researchers with progressive views should focus on studying educational policies, structures, and administration. However, it is crucial to consider broader geopolitical themes to gain a deeper understanding of local, national, and global realities. The utopia of education enabled solely through dialogue, interpersonal relationships, and the overcoming of inequalities, as envisioned by Paulo Freire, remains relevant. It goes beyond the ability to think independently or about one’s reality and the realities of others, even those who are close, due to the influence of educational policies already implemented.

In conclusion, it is imperative to advocate for a free, laic, and quality education that is socially referenced. Above all, it should liberate the constraints imposed by capitalism in its neoliberal form.

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²⁹ In the original: “[...] o campo é um jogo no qual as regras do jogo estão elas próprias postas em jogo [...]” (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 29).

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