



# A Sonata<sup>1</sup> on Teacher Education and Professionalization from the Perspective of Neoliberal Public Policies

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**ABSTRACT.** This article focuses on the formation and professionalization of teachers in Brazil, with an emphasis on the perspective of neoliberal public policies. Its main objective is to provide an overview of teacher education and its relationship with professionalization. To achieve this, the literature review is divided into three sections. The first section aims to present the paradigms of teacher education. The following section seeks to understand how neoliberal political changes have influenced teacher education practices. The third section aims to reflect on the changes in the conception of teacher professionalization based on historical, social, and political dynamics, as well as teacher education paradigms. Finally, concluding remarks are provided. The methodology employed in this study is bibliographic research. This work is justified by the understanding that teacher preparation and professionalization are interconnected and have been influenced over time by economic, ideological, and social changes. Ultimately, it is necessary to question and reflect on these issues in order to comprehend teaching theories and practices, and to mobilize educators and various social segments to act as active agents of resistance and produce counter-hegemonic discourse.

**Keywords:** neoliberalism; critical epistemology; teacher training; professional appreciation; professionalization of the educator.

## Uma Sonata sobre formação e profissionalização docente a partir das políticas públicas neoliberais

**RESUMO.** O presente artigo tem como objeto de estudo a formação e a profissionalização docente no Brasil, com ênfase na perspectiva das políticas públicas neoliberais. Tem como objetivo geral traçar panorama acerca da formação de professores e sua relação com a profissionalização docente. Para tanto, este trabalho de abordagem bibliográfica encontra-se dividido em três seções. Na primeira, o ponto central é apresentar os paradigmas da formação de professores. A seção seguinte tem como propósito compreender como as mudanças políticas, de cunho neoliberal, influenciaram as práticas de formação dos professores e a terceira visa a refletir sobre as alterações sofridas na concepção de profissionalização docente a partir das dinâmicas históricas, sociais e políticas e dos paradigmas de formação dos docentes. Por fim, seguem-se os apontamentos finais. A pesquisa bibliográfica foi o caminho metodológico adotado. Esse trabalho se justifica pelo entendimento de que o aprestamento e a profissionalização docente estão imbricados e que a formação de educadores foi influenciada, ao longo do tempo, pelas mudanças econômicas, ideológicas e sociais. Por fim, entende-se que se faz necessário questionar e refletir sobre tais temáticas com o fito de se compreender as preleções e as práticas docentes, bem como mobilizar os profissionais da educação e dos diversos segmentos sociais para atuarem como sujeitos ativos de resistência e produzirem discurso contra hegemônico.

**Palavras-chave:** neoliberalismo; epistemologia crítica; formação de professores; valorização profissional; profissionalização do educador.

## Una sonata sobre la formación y profesionalización docente desde las políticas públicas neoliberales

**RESUMEN.** Este artículo se centra en la formación y profesionalización docente en Brasil, con énfasis en la perspectiva de las políticas públicas neoliberales. Tiene como objetivo principal proporcionar una visión

<sup>1</sup> Sonata is "[...] a piece of music, almost always instrumental and usually in several movements, for a soloist or small ensemble" (Sadie, 1994, p. 885).



general de la educación de los docentes y su relación con la profesionalización. Para ello, la revisión bibliográfica se divide en tres secciones. La primera sección tiene como objetivo presentar los paradigmas de la formación docente. La siguiente sección busca entender cómo los cambios políticos neoliberales han influido en las prácticas de formación docente. La tercera sección tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre los cambios en la concepción de la profesionalización docente basados en las dinámicas históricas, sociales y políticas, así como en los paradigmas de formación docente. Finalmente, se proporcionan observaciones conclusivas. La metodología empleada en este estudio es la investigación bibliográfica. Este trabajo se justifica por la comprensión de que la preparación y la profesionalización docente están interconectadas y han sido influenciadas a lo largo del tiempo por cambios económicos, ideológicos y sociales. En última instancia, es necesario cuestionar y reflexionar sobre estos temas para comprender las teorías y prácticas docentes, y movilizar a educadores y diversos segmentos sociales para actuar como agentes activos de resistencia y producir un discurso contrahegemónico.

**Palavras chave:** neoliberalismo; epistemología crítica; formación de profesores; apreciación profesional; profesionalización del educador.

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## Prelude: An introduction to the debate<sup>2</sup>

Following the enactment of the current Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law No. 9,394, 1996), numerous studies and debates have emerged regarding teacher education and professionalization, particularly based on the educational context within the parameters and guidelines established by the Washington Consensus (World Bank, 1989).

In general terms, the main principles set forth in the Consensus — and which gained prominence in the agendas of governments aligned with capitalist interests — include: the guarantee of private property, the commercial and financial liberalization of nations, and the strong restructuring of the State through privatization, fiscal discipline, reduction of public spending, deregulation of economic markets, and the flexibilization of labor laws.

In Latin America, the first concrete experience of neoliberalism took place in Chile during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–1989). In Brazil, its emergence began more timidly during the Sarney administration, gaining stronger momentum under the governments of Fernando Collor de Mello and Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

Thus, it is within the context of reforms driven by the guidelines set forth in the Washington Consensus that the discussions on the process of teacher education and professionalization are situated in this text.

In this regard, this study is justified by the understanding that teacher preparation and professionalization are intertwined, and that teacher education has been influenced over time by economic, ideological, and social changes within a historical perspective, as well as by state fiscal and financial constraint policies, legislation, and cultural dynamics.

Based on these theoretical assumptions, the general objective is to outline an overview of teacher education, highlighting its relationship with professionalization, particularly within the scope of current neoliberal policies.

To this end, this bibliographic study is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on presenting the paradigms of teacher education that have guided current policies and practices of teacher preparation: technical rationality, practical rationality, and critical epistemology. The following section aims to understand how political changes of a neoliberal nature have influenced teacher education practices in favor of capitalist interests since the 1990s. The third section seeks to reflect on the transformations in the conception of teacher professionalization resulting from historical, social, and political dynamics and from the paradigms of educator preparation. Finally, concluding remarks are presented.

## Adage: teacher education<sup>3</sup>

Guimarães (2004) highlights that in recent decades there has been a significant increase in research and studies addressing the topic of teacher education. This can be explained by the growing importance attributed to education as a means of shaping national identity and consolidating political and ideological ideals, as well as by the need to promote socially meaningful and high-quality schooling for the population in the face of contemporary realities.

<sup>2</sup> Prelude is "[...] an instrumental movement intended to precede a larger work or a group of musical pieces [...]" (Sadie, 1994, p. 742).

<sup>3</sup> Adagio is, according to Sadie (1994), a slow-tempo musical movement — that is, a musical passage performed at a leisurely pace.



Thus, this section aims to briefly contextualize the different paradigms of teacher preparation — technical rationality, practical rationality, and critical rationality — which have guided current teacher education policies and practices.

In the case of technical rationality, teacher education is based on the idea of accumulating theoretical (content-based) and technical (didactic-pedagogical) knowledge for future application, without questioning or reflecting upon daily classroom practice. In this view, teacher education is regarded as a set of formal moments, and pedagogical practice is scarcely considered as a source of knowledge. It is valued only as the locus where the instrumental principles learned in training institutions are applied to solve educational problems.

In summary, within this paradigm, initial education is seen as the apex of professional formation — a guide of immutable norms, knowledge, and scientific techniques for future practice — while continuing education is understood as ‘updating, improvement, training, in-service education, or retraining’ (Mizukami et al., 2002).

This perspective derives from the positivist paradigm, which assumes a static world governed by Cartesian rationalism, mechanism, uniformity, order, stability, and predictability in all areas of life, regardless of place and time. It privileges utilitarian and functional knowledge aimed at understanding reality in order to dominate and transform it (Santos, 2008).

Consequently, teacher preparation under this approach occurs through moments disconnected from the singular and conflictual realities of school environments, resulting in a disjunction between academic professional education (theory) and the field of work (practice).

The technical rationality model was widely questioned due to a crisis of confidence in professional knowledge and education. In its place, the paradigm of practical rationality began to be defended in teacher education and practice, based on the understanding that “[...] the uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflicts [...]” of practice cannot be solved solely by technical solutions (Schön, 2000, p. 17).

Schön (2000) points to ‘artistry or intuition’ as inherent to the constructivist practice of professionals, referring to the competencies of knowing-in-action and reflecting-in-action. Knowing-in-action is a type of tacit and spontaneous knowledge, while reflection-in-action arises from surprising and unexpected situations and serves a critical function: to question the structure of assumptions embedded in knowing-in-action. These competencies, therefore, are part of the process of building reflective practical teaching (learning by doing).

It follows that, when confronted with the complex, divergent, and singular realities of the school environment, teachers, through reflection, construct new ways of acting and teaching that go beyond the content learned in their education programs, thereby establishing their own pedagogical principles, their own knowledge, and their own theories — in other words, a practical knowledge that fosters reflective teaching and practice (Schön, 2000).

Tardif (2008), supporting this idea of rethinking the teacher’s subjectivity, proposes that teachers be considered as subjects who possess, use, and produce knowledge specific to their work. He advocates for an interactive relationship between professional teaching knowledge and the scientific knowledge of the field of education (academic research), asserting that such knowledge is related to the teacher’s personhood, identity, life experience, and professional trajectory. For Tardif, ‘the work of the teacher’ cannot be separated from ‘the person of the teacher’. Moreover, he asserts that educators are the main agents within the school system, as they are the ones who mediate culture and school knowledge in their everyday practice — that is, the teacher embodies the very structure of the educational mission.

The teaching knowledge considered here is pragmatic, resulting from human interaction — personalized, individual, constructed, and applied according to specific situations, and permeated by ethical and emotional components (Tardif, 2008). Therefore, research in education sciences must take into account know-how (the way of teaching), competencies, skills, attitudes, and teacher identity.

Nóvoa (1995b), in accordance with this rationality, discusses the ideal teacher for education. He emphasizes that teachers are a particular kind of professional because they have the task of promoting values and acting as political and cultural agents. Hence, he proposes an educational approach “[...] more centered on teachers, their lives and projects, their beliefs and attitudes, their values and ideals [...]” and on their professional development, without neglecting the “[...] personal and professional dimensions of teaching work” (Nóvoa, 1995a, p. 32).

Accordingly, the epistemology of practice supports a model of teacher education as a continuum of lifelong learning — an ongoing process in which the knowledge derived from teachers’ practice and individualized experience is considered crucial for their formation, alongside interpersonal and professional relationships,



daily experiences, and the family environment (Tardif, 2008; Schön, 2000; Nóvoa, 1995b). In sum, teacher education in this view regards “[...] teaching knowledge and competencies as the result not only of professional training and teaching practice but also of lifelong learning, both inside and outside school” (Mizukami et al., 2002, p. 31), thus placing less emphasis on theoretical and scientific content.

These ideas influenced teacher education studies and ‘practice’ in Brazil until the early 1980s. Schools were viewed as ‘enterprises’, organized through hierarchical divisions of labor, always aiming at productivity and teaching efficiency. At times, under a highly technicist view, the quality of a teacher was measured by their transmission of fixed, finished knowledge — in other words, the teacher’s aptitude was measured by product and outcome. At other times, educational acts were analyzed through classroom interaction processes, focusing on affective, psychological, interpersonal, and experiential aspects, under strong influence from North American authors and research (Cunha, 2013).

Amid these discussions, the political dimension was incorporated into teacher education studies and debates in Brazil at the end of the 1980s, spurred by the country’s redemocratization and by the crisis of the modern scientific paradigm<sup>4</sup>. It became necessary to reflect on power relations and class domination existing within society and, consequently, within education. Education needed to be understood as a political space, a practice constructed historically, socially, and culturally, viewing teachers and students as active agents in the teaching-learning process. Thus, studies on teacher education began to assume new forms and perspectives, and the educator started to be regarded as a concrete subject, that is, as a historical being of social transformation (Cunha, 2013).

From this perspective, educators were understood to have the role of understanding social reality in order to intervene and promote transformation, not merely to adapt teaching to societal needs. Therefore, it became necessary to conceptualize teacher education from a critical perspective<sup>5</sup>, enabling teachers to engage in historical, cultural, and social mediation through pedagogical work.

This perspective conceives teacher education beyond technical qualification or the acquisition and mastery of a set of didactic skills and knowledge (Severino, 2003), and beyond the emphasis on teachers’ competencies, abilities, and attitudes — that is, it embraces a *bildung* perspective.

According to Souza and Magalhães (2014), this approach to teacher education involves the wholeness and full development of the human being in social, emotional, intellectual, pedagogical, technical, spiritual, political, and ethical dimensions, understanding that teaching and learning are collective and shared processes — liberating processes that create ways to reinvent and transform reality through the struggle for social justice.

Severino (2003) emphasizes that teacher education, as *bildung*, must address specific content, technical skills, and situational relations. In other words, it must be conducted in such a way as to make teachers both qualified professionals and conscious individuals aware of education’s significance as a social right — and capable, through their work, of extending that awareness to their students. It becomes clear, therefore, that teacher education under critical rationality (or the epistemology of praxis) must encompass technical, ethical, and political aspects through the construction of knowledge in social, historical, didactic, cultural, philosophical, human, and scientific fields, without neglecting creativity and sensitivity.

However, this perspective has been widely challenged and undermined by neoliberal public policies, which prioritize excellence, assessments, classifications, performance, and productivity in teacher education and professional practice. In this sense, there is a demand, according to Evangelista and Triches (2012, p. 186), for the formation of “[...] a super-teacher — multifunctional, versatile, flexible, proactive, tolerant [...]”, as will be discussed in the following section.

### **Allegretto: Public policies for teacher education<sup>6</sup>**

Beginning in the 1990s, Brazil experienced more intensely a series of social, economic, and political reforms introduced by neoliberalism in capitalist economies. These reforms also reshaped the profile of Brazilian education, mobilizing new curricular trends, new conceptions, new methodologies, and new teaching modalities, as a result of the proposal, materialization, and development of standardizing public policies.

Andrade et al. (2017) demonstrate that these policies were implemented by Brazil’s Ministry of Education but were based on the guidelines of international organizations such as the World Bank (WB), the

<sup>4</sup> For further information on the crisis of the Modern Science paradigm, see Santos (2008).

<sup>5</sup> Also known as the epistemology of praxis (human social activity), in which the dialectical relationship between theory and practice is established as the foundation for constructing knowledge and understanding reality (Souza & Magalhães, 2014; Fernandes, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> *Allegretto* is a musical moment within the sonata, moderately fast, implying a lightness of style (Sadie, 1994).



International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), all in accordance with the Washington Consensus<sup>7</sup> (World Bank, 1989).

Thus, the objective of this section is to understand how these political and ideological changes influenced the conceptions and practices of teacher education in ways that serve the interests of capital.

According to Shiroma and Evangelista (2003), these policies constructed a disqualifying discourse about public schools, denouncing their supposed inefficiency and promoting the alleged need to modernize the educational field — in the teacher's profile, their training, and their 'professionalization'. It was disseminated that this supposed 'educational crisis' was related to factors such as poor management, inadequate teacher preparation, and outdated curricula, which consequently led to an 'exponential growth of the hungry and destitute', as there was a mismatch between the 'product' of the school and the 'demands' of the labor market.

This technical, ideological, and political strategy imposed upon education a salvationist and redemptive view, assigning it the crucial mission of '[...] preparing the next generation to live with risks, uncertainties, and the unexpected' (Shiroma & Evangelista, 2003, p. 9), alongside the teacher. Hence, special attention was directed toward the teacher education process, linking it to the solution of educational, economic, and social problems, with the aim of producing significant changes in the teacher's identity and professionalization — making them a key link between hegemonic neoliberal interests and the broader population.

In this way, the State began to intervene in and direct education through globalized educational policies, promoting the alignment of teacher education with neoliberal standards within Higher Institutes of Education, to the detriment of universities. This shift involved the removal of critical reflection and scientific-academic components from teacher training courses, while strongly emphasizing practice — turning teacher education into a synonym for training and the development of technical competencies, attitudes, and skills necessary for teaching (Magalhães, 2014).

From this perspective, Neves (2013) points out that the teacher became an important organic intellectual of the new pedagogy of neoliberal capitalist hegemony (Third Way<sup>8</sup>), disseminating the ideas, values, and practices of the bourgeoisie within schools. This contributed to increased productivity through more rationalized labor and enabled the consolidation of a new pattern of sociability and collaboration between civil society and the State.

This is the dominant and directive ideology used by capital to prevent counter-hegemonic movements in Brazilian society amid ongoing changes. It seeks to maintain the domination of capital over labor, perpetuate capitalist supremacy, and secure the consent of the less privileged classes to serve capital — with the State acting as 'mediator' and the market as 'arena'. It represents the new pedagogy of hegemony, employing educational actions that redefine political participation and, consequently, teacher education itself.

Thus, the teacher is increasingly shaped as a 'technical implementer of the textbook manual', with an exaltation of practice over theory, an emphasis on competencies rather than scientific or academic knowledge, a neutral treatment of methodological issues, and adherence to pre-established, content-heavy, and technical curricula designed to meet the needs of capital (Arnoni, 2012).

Saviani (2001) and Cossio (2014) reinforce that, under this political bias, teacher education has regressed to technicism. Hence, so-called fast-food<sup>9</sup> courses are privileged — accelerated, standardized, modular, market-oriented, utilitarian, and alienating undergraduate programs with no social, political, or ethical commitment. These programs feature homogenized curricula and depoliticized, content-based teaching materials aligned with managerialist interests, with little concern for the quality of educational work, emancipatory education, or the valorization of the teaching profession.

The teacher is therefore viewed as an 'artisan' of a predetermined pedagogy designed to meet the demands of the capitalist world. The field of study concerning teacher education thus shifts toward political strategy, given the proliferation of new training spaces, the bureaucratization of teaching, and the precarization of educators' working conditions (Cunha, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> The Washington Consensus refers to a set of broad policy measures aimed at promoting neoliberal economic conduct among developing countries, particularly those in Latin America. It encompassed fiscal and tax reform, trade liberalization, privatization policies, encouragement of competition, protection of private property rights, and the reduction of the state's fiscal role (Kuczynski & Williamson, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> "Third Way neoliberal capitalism (as cited in Anthony Giddens) is understood as an update of the classical neoliberal political project, which took shape in Brazil beginning in 1995. It is founded on the combination of neoliberal and social-democratic principles — that is, reconciling the irreconcilable: market and social justice; material exploitation and human emancipation. In other words, this strand seeks to develop a capitalism with a human face: including those who are culturally discriminated against and excluded, fostering initiatives to address social problems, and expanding the purchasing power of the impoverished as strategies for social legitimization" (Neves, 2013, p. 5).

<sup>9</sup> A term used by Leher (2003) to indicate that, along with the process of privatization in education, there has been a rise of a form of schooling that is accelerated, standardized, market-oriented, modularized, utilitarian, and technicist.



According to Shiroma and Evangelista (2003), the work of this ‘artisan teacher’ is directly related to the formation of an ‘essential’ professional for the labor market. Whereas in the past the teacher’s role was to educate for work and for life in society, under this new mindset, teachers are now expected to transform students into proactive, flexible, depoliticized, efficient, functional citizens — adaptable, entrepreneurial, compliant, individualistic, obedient, disciplined, tolerant, and resilient in their condition as workers.

In other words, in this historical moment, with the help of the educator, there arises the need to ‘mold a new type of worker’ — one endowed with principles, values, worldviews, behaviors, attitudes, skills, and habits suitable to contemporary capitalism, as well as to construct a consensus around the bourgeois worldview (Shiroma & Turmina, 2011; Magalhães, 2014).

Therefore, a ‘new’ type of teacher is required — the expert: a teacher conceived as a technically competent, neutral, apolitical, competitive, individualistic, multitasking, adaptable, and flexible professional who meets market demands and knows how to solve and respond to everyday problems. In other words, teachers who help build a mentality in which private interests prevail over collective social ones — transforming educators into entrepreneurial subjects who think primarily of themselves, their own lives, and their own productivity (Ball, 2002, 2012; Shiroma & Evangelista, 2003; Magalhães, 2014; Alves et al., 2021).

In alignment with this discourse of ‘improving educational quality’, the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) was approved in 2017, defining the “[...] organic and progressive set of essential learning that all students must develop throughout the stages and modalities of Basic Education [...]” and guiding teacher education policies, school curricula, teaching materials, and educational quality assessments across Brazil’s regions and schools (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Andrade et al. (2017, p. 17) point out that the BNCC reinforced the notion of “[...] education as a path to improving individual and societal conditions and to the country’s economic development, while ignoring other possibilities [...]” — instilling the idea that through this ‘new’ education, it would be possible to reverse the historical exclusion of social groups, a process essential to capital reproduction. Only those ‘poor’ students who failed to struggle hard enough for it — who did not seek opportunities — would remain excluded (Freitas, 2018; Cossio, 2014).

Thus, the BNCC’s objective becomes evident: to spread a discourse of educational quality and equity, treating teaching in a homogeneous and standardized way, fostering competencies, attitudes, and skills necessary for the future ‘employees’ of companies, thereby reinforcing the reproduction of dominant class power and maintaining the “[...] social cohesion necessary for the proper functioning of the market [...]” (Andrade et al., 2017, p. 21). In short, it promotes the idea of ‘education for all’ — where everyone has access, but few achieve emancipation — since schooling ultimately serves the needs of the labor market.

A similar perspective is found in Resolution CNE/CP No. 2 of December 20, 2019, which established the National Curricular Guidelines for the Initial Education of Basic Education Teachers and instituted the National Common Base for the Initial Education of Basic Education Teachers (BNC-Formação), thereby revoking Resolution CNE/CP No. 2 of July 1, 2015 (MEC, 2019).

It is worth noting that the approval of these guidelines occurred without deep public debate and as part of broader educational reforms within a neoliberal and conservative context, in alignment with the BNCC. They structured teacher education around instrumentality (what must be done), standardization/homogenization, methodology (how to teach), utility, and prescriptiveness (Moreira et al., 2022; Bazzo & Scheibe, 2019).

Therefore, there is a noticeable shift in the concept of teacher professionalization — once understood as a socio-political practice and a universal human right, now reduced to a synonym for adaptation to labor market demands and performative<sup>10</sup> efficiency, as will be discussed in the following section.

## Presto: Teacher professionalization<sup>11</sup>

In the words of Guimarães (2004), teacher education serves as the link between professional practice (professionalization) and the construction of the educator’s identity by formalizing the social dynamics of teaching work.

Thus, teacher professionalization in Brazil today involves discussing teaching as a profession — its limits, misunderstandings, possibilities, and the establishment of professional associations and ethical statutes — as well as issues of proletarianization (loss of control over one’s own work, working hours, working conditions

<sup>10</sup> According to Ball (2012, p. 37, author’s emphasis), “[...] performativity is a technology, a culture, and a mode of regulation that employs evaluations, comparisons, and displays as means of control, attrition, and change. The performances of individuals or organizations serve as measures of productivity or output, demonstrations of ‘quality,’ or ‘moments’ of promotion or inspection.”

<sup>11</sup> A fast musical movement, lively and brisk (Sadie, 1994).



and divisions, precariousness of teaching labor, remuneration, increased oversight of performance, professional isolation). It also involves debates concerning labor relations, professional status, autonomy, professional knowledge, gender issues, and more. In other words, it is necessary to understand teaching as a historical and dynamic construction within the world of work in order to discuss and grasp the professionalization of teachers (Guimarães, 2004).

From this perspective, Guimarães (2004) traces the history of teacher professionalization in Brazil, showing that up until the early 20th century, the profession enjoyed great social prestige, which began to decline around 1920 as a consequence of public policies that devalued educators. He explains that by 1930, a process of deprofessionalization began, with professionalization now grounded in the constitution of a “[...] personalistic knowledge, mainly based on personal skills such as empathy, tolerance, the ability to listen, authenticity, and the teacher’s personal transparency [...]” (Guimarães, 2004, p. 49) — a set of ‘skills without a craft’.

In the discourses of the 1970s and 1980s, professionalization was based on a “[...] technical knowledge, eminently a priori, and of an applicative nature concerning the teacher’s performance [...]” (Guimarães, 2004, p. 49), representing neglect and devaluation of the teaching profession amid political, economic, ideological, and cultural discourses. From this perspective, discussions began about the role of practice as the foundation of teacher education, recognizing the teacher as a researcher and shifting the focus of education from the transmission of technical, pedagogical, didactic, and scientific knowledge to professional practice.

Thus, based on the reflections presented in the previous section of this article, it can be said that genuine teacher professionalization — expressed through the quality of teaching and its consequent social appreciation — was not the objective of the ‘reform’ process of Brazilian education under neoliberal policies, since such reforms served only to “[...] promote the superficialization of teaching, the bureaucratization of teachers’ work, competition among peers, and segmentation within the profession” (Shiroma & Evangelista, 2003, p. 37).

Shiroma and Evangelista (2009, p. 535) assert that “[...] the policy of teacher and administrator professionalization, in the way it has been implemented, aims not at increasing the qualification of the teaching staff, but rather at its de-intellectualization [...]” — fostering individualization, professional devaluation, and the precarization of educators’ work. This occurs amid a contradictory discourse that simultaneously praises the importance of teachers in students’ lives, highlighting their moral and technical competence.

According to Magalhães (2014), this represents a process of teacher deprofessionalization, as it significantly altered educators’ working conditions, reshaped their profiles and training to meet market interests, and stripped their pedagogical actions of political character. Hence, the change in the notion of teacher professionalization has been presented as necessary for the ‘modernization’ and ‘professional improvement’ of teachers within the hegemonic view, supposedly linked to solving Brazil’s economic and social problems. In other words, professionalization — once understood as connected to the intellectual and political dimensions inherent to teaching — has been transformed into a mere commitment to competence and skill, while depriving teachers of a true sense of belonging to the profession.

It can thus be understood that professionalism, as an ethical and cultural practice of teachers, is reaching its end — undermined by profound changes brought about by reform policies that redefine what it means to be a teacher socially (professional identity). In its place, a new concept of professionalism has emerged: one of obedience to rules imposed by political ‘technologies’ and external demands, characterized by standardization, quantitative assessment, operationality, compliance, instrumentality, and the ‘performative’ technical and practical performance of teachers aligned with the dictates of the labor market and the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) (Ball, 2012; Moreira et al., 2022).

### Coda: Final considerations<sup>12</sup>

In accordance with the aspects discussed throughout this study, it becomes evident that the movement toward reorganizing the process of teacher education serves as a starting point for the possible improvement of teaching professionalism and the re-signification of educators’ practices, as these are processes that are intertwined and interrelated.

However, it is understood that teacher education grounded in the epistemology of praxis — a theoretical-practical activity based on interdependence and a critical, human perspective — is what truly contributes to continuous reflection aimed at building education as a human right, one that is socially meaningful,

<sup>12</sup> It is the final part of a musical piece, functioning as a recapitulation (Sadie, 1994).



emancipatory, and capable of fostering the struggle for the improvement of multiple factors that encompass society as a whole.

It is therefore defended that teacher education should enable the development of a teacher-subject who understands historical, social, economic, political, and cultural realities, who is capable of intervening in and transforming these realities, and who can fight to change the precarious and alienating working conditions imposed upon them, as well as to overcome the ‘terrors’ of performativity and instrumentality.

To this end, it is necessary to deeply question and reflect upon such themes — initial and continuing teacher education, neoliberal educational policies, and teacher professionalization — in order to construct theoretical frameworks about them and to better understand teaching precepts and practices. Furthermore, it is essential to mobilize education professionals and diverse social sectors to act collectively as active subjects of resistance, producing de-alienating and counter-hegemonic discourse within this context of neoliberal and conservative policies.

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