

DOSSIÊ: *Homeschooling* e o direito à educação

Neoliberalism as one of the foundations of homeschooling^{1 2}

O neoliberalismo como um dos fundamentos da educação domiciliar

Romualdo Portela de Oliveira^{①3}

Luciane Muniz Ribeiro Barbosa^{④4}

① School of Education at the University of São Paulo/FEUSP, São Paulo, SP, Brazil.
romualdo@usp.br

④ School of Education at the University of Campinas/FE-Unicamp, Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil.
lumuniz@unicamp.br

Abstract: This paper analyzes neoliberalism as one of the foundations of homeschooling, a phenomenon which has attracted a growing interest in Brazil, evidenced by the attempts to regulate it in the country. In order to conduct such analysis, three of the most recognized representatives of neoliberalism were taken as reference, namely Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman e Ludwig von Mises, especially for their renewed concerns about the liberties, particularly the individual ones. Neoliberalism is presented as one of the theories that supports homeschooling, for its rejection of compulsory education, which carries strong implications for the educational debate, mainly as challenges to the public compulsory school.

Keywords: homeschooling, neoliberalism, compulsory education

Resumo: Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar o neoliberalismo como um dos fundamentos da educação domiciliar, fenômeno de interesse crescente no Brasil, dada a tentativa de regulamentá-lo no país. Para tanto, foram tomados como referência três autorizados representantes do neoliberalismo: Friedrich Hayek; Milton Friedman e Ludwig von Mises e a reiterada preocupação destes com as liberdades, sobretudo as individuais. O artigo argumenta que o neoliberalismo se apresenta como uma das correntes teóricas que também dá suporte ao homeschooling, tendo como ponto crucial de sua fundamentação a rejeição da compulsoriedade da educação escolar, o que gera fortes implicações para o debate educacional, principalmente como desafios à escola pública compulsória.

¹ Copy editor: José Pereira Queiroz, São Paulo, SP, Brazil. ze.pereira.queiroz@gmail.com

² The authors thank Espaço da Escrita – Coordenadoria Geral da Universidade – UNICAMP – for the language services provided (English version).

³ Professor at the School of Education at the University of São Paulo/FEUSP.

⁴ Professor at the School of Education at the University of Campinas/FE-Unicamp.

Palavras-chave: *homeschooling, neoliberalismo, educação compulsória*

Introduction

Homeschooling has been the subject of a lively debate in Brazil. On the one hand, because of the existence of legal disputes⁵ and, on the other hand, because many projects seeking to legalize it are proceeding in the *Congresso Nacional* (the National Congress of Brazil)⁶. The current understanding, by the decision of the *Supremo Tribunal Federal* – STF (the Supreme Federal Court), as well as by the *Conselho Nacional de Educação* – CNE (the National Council of Education), is that the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (or LDB, the Law that regulates education in Brazil), Law no. 9.394 of 1996, establishes that mandatory education must happen inside schools (Barbosa, 2013).

Homeschooling's bases derive from a wide range of anti-statism positions, ranging from anarchists, to individual liberalists, to religious fundamentalists, among others. One of the theoretical movements that also supports this vision of education is neoliberalism.

Central to these bases is the rejection of the compulsoriness of school education. Even though the State having the task of offering school education to everybody with a mandatory study period might be considered an achievement, the subject remains controversial (Oliveira, 2007; Tomasevski, 2001). Rising theoretical questions about free education similar to those formulated by liberals, homeschooling advocates are positioned against a State that monopolizes the control of school education, obligating all citizens to follow it.

⁵ The first case analyzed by the STF was in 2001, denying the possibility of homeschooling practice in Brazil. The STF ministers' arguments were mainly supporting the importance of school as a space for socialization and citizenship education, more than solely for the acquisition of academic contents. After such decision, other families went through legal actions and, even though the possibility of teaching children at home was mostly denied, in 2009, a judge from the city of Maringá authorized a family to do so, provided that the children did periodic tests and were assessed by a psychologist and a social assistant (the case is still in progress). More recently, the Extraordinary Appeal no. 888,815, originated from a writ of security filed against an act from *the Secretary of Education of the city of Canela (RS)*, denied a family's request for homeschooling their daughter. Such case made the STF recognize the theme's general impact; it is being presided by Minister Roberto Barroso and it is pending trial (this case is analyzed in the article "O novo cenário jurisprudencial do direito à educação no Brasil: o ensino domiciliar e outros casos no Supremo Tribunal Federal").

⁶ Since 1994, eight *Projetos de Lei* (or PL, bills) and one *Proposta de Emenda Constitucional* (PEC, a proposal for a constitutional amendment) were presented to the *Câmara dos Deputados* (the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies) with the objective of regulating homeschooling in Brazil, written by deputies from different parties and regions (Barbosa, 2012).

The aim of containing State's 'absolute power' and its intervention, even in the social rights area, is in the definition of the term liberalism itself, as Harold Laski (1973) observes:

as the latter [body of doctrine], no doubt, [liberalism] is directly related to freedom. ... It has sought, almost from the outset of its history, to limit the ambit of political authority, to confine business of government within the framework of constitutional principle; and it has tried, therefore, fairly consistently to discover a system of fundamental rights which the state is not entitled to invade. (p.13)

Francis Fukuyama (1992) supports this thesis by affirming that, from a political perspective, liberalism can be defined "simply as a rule of law that recognizes certain individual rights or freedoms from government control" (p. 42).

By examining the historical evolution of liberalism, it is noteworthy that, from its formulation in Locke's works, to its reasoning by Kant and its modifications by Benjamin Constant, Tocqueville, and Keynes, among others, until finally reaching its most recent versions in the 20th and beginning of 21st centuries, the idea of valuing freedom has always been emphasized (Paim, 1987).

Tocqueville reflects on the existing antithesis between liberty and equality, in his analyses that inspire those who aim to restore the ideal of Freedom against the sinister powers of totalitarianism endangering democracy (Paim, 1987). After all, if all are unequal by nature, equality can only be imposed, coercively, by law. Moreover, he presents the social moral as the backbone of a well constituted democratic society and, in the liberal notion, as something that should be taught by family, at school and in religious environments, and not imposed by the State.

Liberals' position is, thus, contrary to a single national education system. If families are different in their morals, beliefs, and values, how to offer a single kind of education? Which rights does the State possess to promote an education with distinct bases from the ones held by the families?

For Auberon Herbert (1978), a British ultraliberal from the end of the 19th century, the same way State should not interfere in its citizens' religion, it should not possess the right of establishing what kind of education will be equally offered to all. After all, State's education is not for the benefit of men's freedom, since it presents itself as having the nature of a political favor, which creates a relationship of dependence between certain classes, given that

the elite, by paying taxes and fees that are destined to public education, believes it can direct the education of all population, while the working class does not find validity in the schooling of their children (Hebert, 1978).

A nation is a group of people governed by a part of its members. This does not mean, however, that those who govern have unlimited rights. According to this thinking, governing authorities should administer a law system, but refrain from interfering in religion and education. If the main condition ruling over human lives is the widest freedom possible for all, each man must be free – within the limits imposed by the freedom of others – to judge what constitutes their happiness. In this sense, the State should only guarantee such freedom. It should not, moreover, grant itself duties or refrain from acting in ways that might interfere in said freedom, even when the intentions seem useful, as is the case of offering a national educational system (Hebert, 1978).

Therefore, for a part of liberals, the compulsoriness of school education in institutions guided by the State is contradictory, since the role of school education is to guarantee freedom. When this contradiction is made evident, questions about the State's real roles and the way it performs its power arise, provoking, many times, the violation of established rules: it is not incorrect to perceive that the possibility of Law violation is intrinsic to Law itself, as the realization of freedom (Reale, 1987).

The denial of the education compulsorily provided by the State is based on arguments contrary to the intervention of the State in citizens' freedom, as well as on criticism on the precariousness of public education, since "all men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to, and to resist, the government, when its tyranny or its *inefficiency* are great and unendurable [emphasis added]" (Thoreau, 1849).

These formulations, deriving from 19th century liberalism, are reconfigured during the 20th century, in the context of facing the experiences of more State interference in the economic and social domains resulting from the welfare state and from the attempts to build socialism after the 1917 Russian revolution. As it is observed by Reginaldo Moraes (2001), what is commonly called neoliberalism proclaims the return to an economic organization that had prevailed, for a short time, in the middle of the 19th century (with free trade imposed by England), and during the period from 1870 to 1914, the most globalized phase of world

economy, which had the free movement of capital and goods, in the monetary regimen of the so-called gold standard. Therefore, classical liberalism was to a certain extent the ideology of commercial and manufacture capitalism in expansion – and an attack on the political regulations produced by the guilds and the mercantile State. It can be said that neoliberalism, similarly, is the capitalism ideology in the age of maximum wealth financialization, the age of the most liquid wealth, the age of volatile capital – and an attack on the 20th century ways of economic regulation such as socialism, Keynesianism, welfare state, Third-Worldism, and the Latin-American developmentalism (Moraes, 2001).

Therefore, the aim of this article is to discuss the ways in which neoliberalism serves as a base for homeschooling and its implications for the educational debate, having as references three of its most acknowledged representatives: Ludwig Heinrich Edler von Mises⁷, Milton Friedman⁸, and Friedrich August von Hayek⁹.

According to Roberto Bueno (2012), although very different, the works of these three authors have certain common features. The line that bonds them inexorably is the repeated concern with freedoms, mainly the individual one, without losing track of its projection over the collective ones (p. 13). The author also adds that first aspect uniting Mises, Friedman and Hayek is their common view that the State and its whole power structure are not reliable, apart from when the aim is to preserve citizens' individual rights and freedom. For that reason, their intellectual projects frequently converge. Hayek and Friedman are also advocates of what is commonly called night-watchman State (Bueno, 2012). Their education concepts will be addressed bellow, from what unites them, to the nuances that differentiate them.

⁷ Ukrainian Ludwig Heinrich Edler von Mises, economist, philosopher and one of the icons from the Austrian School, was a big advocate of economic freedom as the basic support of individual freedom.

⁸ North-American economist Milton Friedman, Nobel Prize in Economics winner in 1976 and founder of the Mont Pelerin Society, in 1948, along with Friedrich Hayek. He had an extensive academic life, as the head of the Department of Economics from the University of Chicago, USA, and published numerous works on politics and economic history.

⁹ Austrian economist Friedrich August von Hayek, Nobel Prize in Economics winner in 1974, became one of the leaders of the “Austrian School of Economics,” besides being one of the most important liberal thinkers of the 20th century, for his contributions in the legal, political, philosophical, and historical areas, besides economics.

Neoliberals and compulsory education

In educational terms, the first convergence among Mises, Friedman and Hayek is found in their rejection of compulsory education. They are not necessarily against the individual being obligated to study. However, they position themselves against the idea that the only provider of this education should be the State. The idea that all public needs should be satisfied by compulsory organization, and that all resources individuals are willing to allocate to public purposes should be under government control is completely strange to the basic principles of a free society (Hayek, 1985).

For Mises (1998), the objection also concerns the curricular guidance and the focus given to the different curriculum components, especially history and economics.

In countries that are not harassed by struggles between various linguistic groups public education can work very well if it is limited to reading, writing, and arithmetic. With bright children it is even possible to add elementary notions of geometry, the natural sciences, and the valid laws of the country. But as soon as one wants to go farther, serious difficulties appear. Teaching at the elementary level necessarily turns into indoctrination. ... The party that operates the schools is in a position to propagandize its tenets and to disparage those of other parties.

In the field of religious education the liberals solved this problem by the separation of state and church. In liberal countries religion is no longer taught in public schools. But the parents are free to send their children into denominational schools supported by religious communities.

However, the problem does not refer only to the teaching of religion and of certain theories of the natural sciences at variance with the Bible. It concerns even more the teaching of history and economics. The public is aware of the matter only with regard to the international aspects of the teaching of history. There is some talk today about the necessity of freeing the teaching of history from the impact of nationalism and chauvinism. But few people realize that the problem of impartiality and objectivity is no less present in dealing with the domestic aspects of history. The teacher's or the textbook author's own social philosophy colors the narrative. The more the treatment must be simplified and condensed in order to be comprehensible to the immature minds of children and adolescents, the worse are the effects. (pp. 872-873)

Concerning the idea of uniformity of action in terms of education, he extends his criticism to the religious discourse: "because it demands toleration of all opinions and all churches and sects, it [liberalism] must recall them all to their proper bounds whenever they venture intolerantly beyond them" (Mises, 2002, p. 56). Therefore, for Mises, in a social order based on peaceful cooperation, there would be no place for churches' monopoly on

instruction and education. What needs to be given to churches is what their followers grant them by their own free will. Furthermore, churches would not be allowed to demand anything from people that do not wish to follow them.

It is difficult to understand how these principles of liberalism could make enemies among the communicants of the various faiths. If they make it impossible for a church to make converts by force, whether its own or that placed at its disposal by the state, on the other hand they also protect that church against coercive proselytization by other churches and sects. What liberalism takes from the church with one hand it gives back again with the other. Even religious zealots must concede that liberalism takes nothing from faith of what belongs to its proper sphere. (Mises, 2002, p. 56)

After observing that compulsory education is incompatible with the freedoms advocated in his ideals, he widens his objection. “The right of self-determination works to the advantage only of those who comprise the majority. In order to protect minorities as well, domestic measures are required, of which we shall first consider those involving the national policy in regard to education” (Mises, 2002, pp. 113-114). Mises understands that school attendance is compulsory in most countries, and parents are obliged to send their children to school for public instruction for a few years, or to provide them with an equivalent instruction at home. He recognizes there are arguments for and against compulsory education, and that the issue still raises lively discussions; however, he does not seem to be willing to scrutinize these arguments, given that, in his analysis, they are not presently relevant to the issue: “There is only one argument that has any bearing at all on this question, viz., that continued adherence to a policy of compulsory education is utterly incompatible with efforts to establish lasting peace” (Mises, 2002, p.114).

Thus, Mises (2002) is clearly against compulsory education, supporting his position that the State should conform to what its duties are, to its inalienable functions, which is not the case, in his education perspective, of what would be better if offered by particulars:

There is, in fact, only one solution: the state, the government, the laws must not in any way concern themselves with schooling or education. ... The rearing and instruction of youth must be left entirely to parents and to private associations and institutions. It is better that a number of boys grow up without formal education than that they enjoy the benefit of schooling only to run the risk, once they have grown up, of being killed or maimed. A healthy illiterate is always better than a literate cripple. But even if we eliminate the spiritual coercion exercised by compulsory education, we should still be far from having done everything that is necessary in order to remove all the sources of friction between the nationalities living in polyglot territories. (p. 115)

Moreover, Mises (2002) adds that if school is not the only one, it might be the most dangerous means of national oppression. Thus, all interference in economic life, by the government, runs the risk of becoming a means of “persecuting the members of nationalities speaking a language different from that of the ruling group. For this reason, in the interest of preserving peace, the activity of the government must be limited to the sphere in which it is, in the strictest sense of the word, indispensable” (p. 116).

Milton Friedman (1962) stands out for having introduced the idea of the school voucher, a theme that has been present in many debates on educational theory and policy, especially in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States of America, and is the main educational proposition linked to neoliberalism. In the text “The role of government in Education” (the sixth chapter of *Capitalism and freedom*, one of his most renowned works, from 1962), Friedman expresses severe criticism of the government’s action in offering public education or instruction. He considers it an indiscriminate extension of government’s responsibility. Therefore, opposing the State offer of education, he advocates that the State should subsidize education through a vouchers program for low-income students, while the administration of schools should remain entirely private.

If at first it may seem contradictory that a liberal, such as Friedman (1962), would suggest the State’s assistance and intervention in education, the author himself reasons, in the beginning of the aforementioned chapter, that government intervention in education can be interpreted in two ways:

The first is the existence of substantial “neighborhood effects”, [emphasis on original] i.e., circumstances under which the action of one individual imposes significant costs on other individuals for which it is not feasible to make him compensate them, or yields significant gains to other individuals for which it is not feasible to make them compensate him – circumstances that make voluntary exchange impossible. The second is the paternalistic concern for children and other irresponsible individuals. (p. 75)

Such affirmations will form the basis of his assumptions for the discussion and formulation of suggestions in the educational area. Concerning primary and secondary instruction, it is important to highlight the emphasis on the “neighborhood effects” argument, or the understanding that a person’s education does not benefit only that person and his/her family, but society as a whole. For this reason, a “minimum” general education for citizens

(what he calls a minimum degree of literacy and knowledge) contributes to the acceptance of values he considers essential for a stable and democratic society (Friedman, 1962).

Thus, the State could demand that each child receives a minimum instruction degree, without any other interference. The problem would be for the ones who cannot afford these schooling expenses, for whom he defends there should be government subsidy. The conjunction of the demand of a minimum instruction and of this form of government subsidy would bring about the end of the nationalization of educational institutions by the government.

Governments could require a minimum level of schooling financed by giving parents vouchers redeemable for a specified maximum sum per child per year if spent on “approved” [emphasis on original] educational services. Parents would then be free to spend this sum and any additional sum they themselves provided on purchasing educational services from an “approved” institution of their own choice. The educational services could be rendered by private enterprises operated for profit, or by non-profit institutions. (Friedman, 1962, pp. 77-78)

The government’s role would be restricted to maintaining minimum operation standards, including the guarantee of minimum content in the programs (Friedman, 1962). However, Friedman (1962) himself warns that such government action, in terms of principles, would clash with the preservation of freedom itself, since,

Drawing a line between providing for the common social values required for a stable society, on the one hand, and indoctrination inhibiting freedom of thought and belief, on the other, is another of those vague boundaries that is easier to mention than to define. (pp. 78-79)

The extinction of government action in school offering (or what Friedman calls “denationalizing schooling”) would benefit individual freedom, allowing for more choosing space for parents. Free competition between companies would bring about the opening of a wide range of schools to satisfy consumer demands more effectively. It would also reduce both the need for tax collection through people’s entire lives, that the government would invest only in a certain moment of their children’s education, as well as the constant resistance and complains of the parents who have already sent their children to paid schools and affirm to pay twice for education: directly in tuition fees, and indirectly through taxes (Friedman, 1962).

For the primary and secondary levels, Friedman (1962) points out as a more adequate solution the combination of public and private schools, and parents who chose private schools would then receive the estimated value that would be spent educating a child in a public school. For him, this action would create a healthy competition among schools, guaranteeing the development and progress of all schools; “not least of its benefits would be to make the salaries of school teachers responsive to market forces” (p. 81).

Such initial ideas on the vouchers, presented within the “In the role of government in Education,” were expanded upon on other texts written by Friedman, such as “Decentralizing schools,” published in *Newsweek*, in 1968, in which he presents the following proposal:

A far better alternative to political control is to introduce competition in schooling, to give parents a real choice. Why not say to every parent, “The community is committed to spending X dollars a year on schooling your child. If you do not send your child to our public school, you relieve us of this cost. In return, the community will give you a voucher for X dollars a year per child. You can use this voucher to purchase schooling at any other approved school, public or private, but for no other purpose” [emphasis on original] (Friedman, 1968, p. 100)

It is also important to highlight the article “Selling school like groceries: the voucher idea,” published in *The New York Times Magazine*, in 1975, in which he argues for the elimination of obligatory schooling, and of government action, in the offering and funding of schools (except for the financial assistance to the people in need). This would result on the wide and positive action of the market, promoting freedom, and the equality of opportunities.

Friedman’s stances on educational issues, such as the defense of the vouchers, led to the founding, in 1996, of the “Friedman Foundation: for educational choice”, by his wife, Rose D. Friedman, and himself. The Foundation is still active, even after the couple’s death. Currently, under the name of *EdChoice*, the foundation presents, in its website, a wide range of informative materials for families, researchers and policymakers, besides celebrating the fact that more than half of the USA offers school choice programs¹⁰.

Friedrich Hayek, in his work “The constitution of liberty” (2006), originally published in 1960, also criticizes State’s compulsoriness of education. In his understanding, handing everyone’s education over to only one provider would present a threat to individual liberty.

¹⁰ Retrieved July 20, 2017 <http://www.edchoice.org/who-we-are/our-founders/>.

He accepts the idea that education should not be compulsory, and opposes education being exclusively offered in public schools.

But with respect to the great majority of the population, it would undoubtedly be possible to leave the organization and management of education entirely to private efforts, with the government providing merely the basic finance and ensuring a minimum standard for all schools where the vouchers could be spent. Another great advantage of this plan is that parents would no longer be faced with the alternative of having to accept whatever education the government provides or of paying the entire cost of a different and slightly more expensive education themselves; and if they should choose a school out of the common run, they would be required to pay only the additional cost. (p. 329)

Hayek's criticism is very similar to Friedman's. When questioning the compulsoriness of education through the public offer of schools, arguing that the solution would be handing the educational services over to competing companies, Hayek even mentions the vouchers proposal designed by Friedman. Hayek (1982) presents this argument in the following terms:

contrary to an assumption often tacitly made, the fact that some services must be financed by compulsory levies by no means implies that such services should also be administered by government. Once the problem of finance is solved, it will often be the more effective method to leave the organization and management of such services to competitive enterprise and rely on appropriate methods of apportioning the funds raised by compulsion Professor Milton Friedman has developed an ingenious scheme of this kind for the financing of education through vouchers to be given to the parents of the children and to be used by them as total or partial payment for the services rendered by schools of their choice, a principle capable of application in many other fields. (p. 46)

In addition to the idea of a minimal State and the valuing of individualism, both as part of neoliberalism and as present in the previously mentioned authors, there is in Milton Friedman and in Hayek the view that the State is indeed responsible for a certain social organization, namely in two elements: in the matter of education, by distributing vouchers for parents to choose the schools in which to enroll their children; as well as in the assistance of those in need, through a minimum, and universal, protection network (Bueno, 2012).

Ludwig von Mises, on the other hand, is a more radical thinker than the aforementioned ones in his criticism of the State and its institutions. In his classic work *Human action*, from 1949, he questions the idea that education can provide equality of opportunities, since inequality among men is, according to his view, an unavoidable fact:

It is often asserted that the poor man's failure in the competition of the market is caused by his lack of education. Equality of opportunity, it is said, could be provided only by making education at every level accessible to all. There prevails today the tendency to reduce all differences among various peoples to their education and to deny the existence of inborn inequalities in intellect, will power, and character. It is not generally realized that education can never be more than indoctrination with theories and ideas already developed. Education, whatever benefits it may confer, is transmission of traditional doctrines and valuations; it is by necessity conservative. It produces imitation and routine, not improvement and progress. Innovators and creative geniuses cannot be reared in schools. They are precisely the men who defy what the school has taught them. (Mises, 1998, p. 311)

In his perspective, education would not have the role of redeeming social inequality, present in other liberal thinkers, and, therefore, its defense as an essential part of men's rights can be relativized¹¹.

From neoliberalism to homeschooling

It is possible to notice that the idea of denying school compulsoriness, associated with the advocating of a minimal State, which should interfere sparsely in educational issues, influenced the history of the homeschooling movement in North America. Analyzing the reasons given for practicing homeschooling in the 1970s, Reich (2002) found that families expressed a liberal, humanistic and pedagogical orientation. It was also during the same decade that the writings of Ivan Illich and of John Holt, challenging school structure and positioning themselves against it, gained notoriety and started being used in the context of defending the regulation of homeschooling, especially in the United States of America.

Thus, even though Milton Friedman and Fredrik Hayek have dwelled on the issue of the vouchers, but not directly on homeschooling, their works can be placed in the context of the changes in educational policies in North America, that occurred particularly as a

¹¹ Even in the relationship between education and the professional market, his view minimizes the importance of formal education: "In order to succeed in business a man does not need a degree from a school of business administration. These schools train the subalterns for routine jobs. They certainly do not train entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur cannot be trained. A man becomes an entrepreneur in seizing an opportunity and filling the gap. No special education is required for such a display of keen judgment, foresight, and energy. The most successful businessmen were often uneducated when measured by the scholastic standards of the teaching profession. But they were equal to their social function of adjusting production to the most urgent demand. Because of these merits the consumers chose them for business leadership" (Mises, 1998, p. 311).

consequence of the school reforms starting in the 1980s and of the school choice program¹². According to Scott Davies and Janice Aurini (2003), such changes in context involved a multiplicity of groups pressuring and making efforts, leading to many legal and political victories, which made evident the growth of charter schools, of the experiments with vouchers, of new private schools, and of homeschooling. This political change has affected homeschooling practice in two ways: by bringing higher legitimacy to the movement, presenting it as one among many possible choices for the parents (and not as an exception or a behavior deviation anymore); and by attracting new people, considering that choice culture has made homeschooling increasingly diverse (concerning the population, objectives, applied methods, among others) (Davies & Aurini, 2003).

For Lubienski (2003), for a broaden neoliberal thinking on the role of the individual in market societies, homeschooling represents a serious tendency of both the withdrawal of collective efforts and the privatization of the control in the pursuit of individual advantages. Supported by the idea of a democratic society and what they believe to be contributions for its maintenance, those favorable to homeschooling argue that it and its good academic results contribute for the common good, bringing forth, generally, a more enlightened population. Moreover, it would also be promoting the common good through the education of future leaders for the benefit of all (Lubienski, 2000).

In North America, even with a growing movement on behalf of homeschooling regulation, homeschooler parents, organized into groups and associations, continue to exert a lot of political influence in order to prevent it. Gaither (2009) believes that the defenders of homeschooling regulation have not yet been capable of matching the political energy and organizational action of these highly motivated parents. Furthermore, due to the lack of opposing organizations with similar lobby capacity, homeschooling associations representing the parents' interests will continue to act against the regulation of this educational practice (Reich, 2002).

Gaither (2008) also highlights that all the growth, expansion and modernization of the homeschool movement transformed it into a great business. It has developed a strong market

¹² "School choice allows public education funds to follow students to the schools or services that best fit their needs – whether that's to a public school, private school, charter school, home school or any other learning environment parents choose for their kids". Retrieved July 20, from <https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/what-is-school-choice/>

around itself that mobilizes publishers and companies that act on conferences serving millions of people, on selling materials online, among others, generating great profit. On the other hand, public funding of virtual schools has also contributed to this context of expansion. This new scenario, added to the growing popularity¹³ of homeschooling, makes the author affirm that, despite many parents still teaching their children at home as a protest against public education, more and more people are choosing to homeschool simply because it makes sense to the family's circumstances at the moment: "They are the new domestic educators, returning to the historic practice of using the home to educate for pragmatic rather than ideological reasons" (Gaither, 2009, p. 342).

Recent research suggests a scenario in which academic reasons are more determining than religious ones when choosing to homeschool in North America (Gaither, 2008, p. 204). In Brazil, even though families' motivations are still little known, it is possible to recognize, besides the religious and moral motives, a concern with the academic performance of children, facing the failure of school (Vieira, 2012).

On the other hand, Mises's followers are more radical in the rejection of the State in education, opposing even private schools that are established by subsidies and dependence relations. Therefore, in this perspective they defend that private schools and homeschooling should remain independent from the State.

One of Mises's better-known followers, Rothbard (1999), affirms that prohibiting parents to teach their own children would be the most severe injustice:

Parental instruction conforms to the ideal arrangement. It is, first of all, individualized instruction, the teacher dealing directly with the unique child, and addressing himself to his capabilities and interests. Second, what people can know the aptitudes and personality of the child better than his own parents? The parents' daily familiarity with, and love for, their children, renders them uniquely qualified to give the child the formal instruction necessary. Here the child receives individual attention for his own personality. No one is as qualified as the parent to know how much or at what pace he should teach the child, what the child's requirements are for freedom or guidance etc. (p. 8)

Rothbard's arguments (1999) prioritize homeschooling even when compared with private school. For him, the alternative of sending children to a private school is not

¹³ According to Gaither (2009), in the USA, the press has more often reported on celebrities that were homeschooled or that chose this option for their children, showing homeschooling not as a hippie or fundamentalist movement anymore, but as something increasingly "fashionable."

satisfactory, given that its structure – with classes with many children, pre-defined schedule and curriculum, mass tutoring (teachers instructing many children at the same time), among others – precludes the adequate instruction and the respect to each child's individual pace. The only reason for choosing schools would be the economic one, since the price of individual teaching is prohibitive for most parents, given that it is higher:

For if the parents' selection of instruction is completely free and unhampered by State coercion, they, knowing and loving the child best, will be able to select the best type of instruction that they can afford. If they hire tutors, they will choose the most competent for their child. If they can select any type of private school, they will select that type which is best suited for their child. (Rothbard, 1999, pp. 8-9)

He also considers the advantage of private schools' unlimited possibilities of development, which has the consequence of allowing for the establishment, in the free market, of different kinds of schools for different demands. However, Rothbard (1999) questions the fact that the State requires certain "standards" to be followed even in private schools. Regarding these issues he argues that:

Schools will tend to be developed especially for bright children, for average children, and for dull ones, for those with broad aptitudes, and for those for whom it would be best to specialize etc. But if the State decrees that there may be no schools which do not, for example, teach arithmetic, it would mean that those children who may be bright in other subjects but have little or no aptitude for arithmetic will have to be subjected to needless suffering. The State's imposition of uniform standards does grave violation to the diversity of human tastes and abilities. (p. 9)

Therefore, the only way of being protected from the harmful influence of the State would be homeschooling, because even private schools would not have the means to overcome State's regulation: "By enforcing certification for minimum standards, the State effectively, though subtly, dominates the private schools and makes them, in effect, extensions of the public school system" (Rothbard, 1999, p. 16). For him, removing compulsory education and obligatory standards is needed for private schools to be free and to work independently.

Finally, Rothbard (1999) makes use of an analogy with newspapers to protest against the compulsoriness of education.

One of the best ways of regarding the problem of compulsory education is to think of the almost exact analogy in the area of that other great educational medium – the newspaper. What would we think of a proposal for the government, Federal or State, to use the taxpayers' money to set up a nationwide chain of public newspapers, and compel all people, or all children, to read them? What would we think furthermore of the government's outlawing all other newspapers, or indeed outlawing all newspapers that do not come up to the "standards" of what a government commission thinks children ought to read? Such a proposal would be generally regarded with horror in America, and yet this is exactly the sort of regime that the government has established in the sphere of scholastic instruction. (p. 17)

Final remarks

As we aimed to point out in this study, the formulations of the main ideologists of neoliberalism can base homeschooling, firstly by their rejection of any kind of compulsoriness coming from the State. In this aspect, albeit unwillingly, Friedman and Hayek admit the existence of some compulsoriness, but reject the idea of the State having the exclusive offer of education, instead advocating for the public funding of private schools through vouchers. On the other hand, Mises and his followers are more emphatic on their rejection of any State intervention in education. They are reluctant to accept even the private school, for it is not exempt from government control, in the figure of economic dependence, if vouchers are adopted, as well as in the interference of centrally defined curricular guidance.

In this perspective, Bruce Arai (1999) allows us to understand where the proposal of homeschooling is placed in terms of changes in the foundations of education in society. Considering the perspective of citizenship education, he states:

While the form and content of citizenship education among homeschoolers is clearly different from what children receive in school, it is not an inferior experience. Homeschoolers, in other words, can be good citizens. Here I have argued that homeschoolers, despite being accused of not being good citizens, are actually engaged in a process of defining their own vision of what it means to be a citizen. They clearly do not believe that compulsory schooling is a necessary prerequisite of adequate citizenship and they prefer to stress the importance of family and participation in public activities as the basis of their understanding of the good citizen. (p. 9)

Therefore, Arai (1999) points out a fundamental question, brought forth by this debate, for the educational policies on homeschooling and compulsory education. In this author's evaluation, the biggest consequence is the understanding that schools cannot be the only way, or even the primary agent, of citizenship education for all citizens. This implies the

recognition that homeschooled children can be good citizens, even if their view on citizenship differs from the one taught at schools.

This undermines the arguments that schooling should be compulsory for all children in order to preserve “democracy”, [emphasis on original] and that wanting a right to not send children to a common school is necessarily to want to keep them ethically servile. Most homeschooled children and their parents ... are fervent supporters of democracy and have no interest in ethical servility. Schooling is not an antidote to ethical servility, and policies surrounding the compulsory nature of school should be reexamined in light of this. Specifically, the need to educate all children to be good citizens has always been a cornerstone of mandatory schooling policies, so if these policies are to be retained, they need to account for the fact that children can become good citizens without going to school. This is not to suggest that a rationale for compulsory schooling is impossible, but only that it cannot be based primarily on constructing good citizens. (p. 9)

It is important to highlight the latent conflict between different educational perspectives supported to a higher or lower degree by the State’s participation; a division which might serve as an important path for the interpretation of other educational policies. The higher or lower legitimacy of each one of these perspectives lies on the ability they possess to show society that they can achieve a widened human education. This is certainly a challenge for public education, since the rise of alternatives to compulsory public school is reinforced by its insufficiency. Only by demonstrating that it is possible to guarantee a quality education for all will public school be capable of (re)hegemonizing the general perception of it as a good that should be defended by the population. In this regard, homeschooling provides an additional challenge for compulsory public school that, to an extent, was preceded by the private school.

References

- Arai, B. A. (1999, September). Homeschooling and the redefinition of citizenship. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 7(27).
- Barbosa, L. M. R. (2012, janeiro/junho). Propostas que visam à legalização do ensino em casa no Brasil. *Revista de Direito Educacional*, 3(5), 41-58.
- Barbosa, L. M. R. (2013). *Ensino em casa no Brasil: um desafio à escola?* Tese de Doutorado, Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.
- Bueno, R. (2012, 2. Semestre). A centralidade do argumento neoliberal em Von Mises, Hayek e Friedman: uma via para a crítica política contemporânea. *Ciências Sociais Aplicadas em Revista*, 12(23), 9-34.
- Davies, S., & Aurini, J. (2003, May). Home schooling and Canadian educational politics: rights, pluralism and pedagogical individualism. *Evaluation & Research in Education*, 17(2&3), 63-73.
- Friedman, M. (1962). *Capitalismo e liberdade*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962.
- Friedman, M. (1968). Decentralizing schools. *Newsweek*. Retrieved Abril 16, 2016 from <http://0055d26.netsolhost.com/friedman/pdfs/newsweek/NW.11.18.1968.pdf>
- Friedman, M. (1975). Selling school like groceries: the voucher idea. *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved Abril 16, 2016 from <http://www.edchoice.org/who-we-are/our-founders/the-friedmans-on-school-choice/article/selling-school-like-groceries-the-voucher-idea/>
- Fukuyama, F. (1992). *O fim da história e o último homem*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco.
- Gaither, M. (2008). *Homeschool: An American history*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gaither, M. (2009, November). Homeschooling in the USA: Past, present and future. *Theory and Research in Education*, 7(3), 331-346.
- Hayek, F. A. (1982). *Law, legislation and liberty*. London: Routledge.
- Hayek, F. A. (2006). *The constitution of liberty*. London: Routledge.

- Herbert, A. (1978). *The right and wrong of compulsion by the state, and other essays*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.
- Laski, H. J. (1962). *O liberalismo europeu*. São Paulo: Mestre Jou.
- Lubienski, C. (2000). Whither the Common good? A critique of home schooling. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 75(1&2), 207-232.
- Lubienski, C. (2003). A critical view of home education. *Evaluation and Research in Education*, 17(2&3), 167-178.
- Mises, L. (1998). *Human action: A treatise on economics*. Auburn: The Ludwig von Mises Institute.
- Mises, L. (2002). *Liberalism in the classical tradition*. New York: The Foundation for Economic Education.
- Moraes, R C. C. (2001). *Neoliberalismo: de onde vem, para onde vai?* São Paulo: Ed. Senac.
- Oliveira, R. P. (2007). O direito à educação. In R. P. Oliveira, & T. Adrião (Orgs.), *Gestão, financiamento e direito à educação: análise da Constituição Federal e da LDB* (3 ed., Vol.1, pp.15-41). São Paulo: Xamã.
- Paim, A. (1987). *Evolução histórica do liberalismo* (Vol. 1). Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia.
- Reale, M. (1987). Cercitividade e coercibilidade. In M. Reale. *Filosofia do Direito* (Cap. XLIV, pp.672-684). São Paulo: Saraiva.
- Reich, R. (2002). Testing the boundaries of parental authority over education: the case of homeschooling. *Nomus*, 43, 275-313.
- Rothbard, M. N. (2013). *Educação: livre e obrigatória*. São Paulo: Instituto Ludwig von Mises, Brasil.
- Thoreau, H. D. (1849). *Desobediência civil*. Retrieved June 7, 2016 from <<http://www.dominiopublico.gov.br/download/texto/cv000019.pdf>>.
- Tomasevski, K. (2001). *Free and compulsory education for all children: the gap between promise and performance* (Right to Education Primers, n.2). Lund and Stockholm Sweden: Raoul Wallenberg Institute and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

Vieira, A. O. P. (2012). *“Escola? Não, obrigado”*: um retrato da homeschooling no Brasil. Monografia de Graduação, Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Brasília.

Submitted on 2016, July 7th; accepted on 2016, October 13th.