

Problematizing of homeschooling: a defense of the public school as a common democratic space^{1 2 3 4}

Problematização da escolarização doméstica: uma defesa da escola pública enquanto espaço comum e democrático

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Abstract

This paper problematizes home schooling by analyzing bills currently under review in the Chamber of Deputies, as well as reports by mothers on the intensification of homeschooling during the coronavirus crisis. We understand that the proposal of homeschooling is aligned with a conservative neoliberal governmentality with a focus on the processes of individualization, exclusion, and teacher de-professionalization, which have prevented the schooling process from being shared in the common, public, and democratic school setting. As a form of resistance to such a process, we have brought up the concept of common as proposed by Dardot and Laval, which has enabled us to think of school as a non-appropriable setting.

Keywords: home schooling, conservative neoliberal governmentality, teachers, defense of public school

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Resumo

Este artigo problematiza a escolarização doméstica, analisando Projetos de Lei em trâmite na Câmara de Deputados, assim como relatos de mães sobre a intensificação da escolarização doméstica em meio à crise do coronavírus. Compreendemos que a proposta de escolarização doméstica se alinha a uma governamentalidade neoliberal conservadora, cuja centralidade está nos processos de individualização, exclusão e desprofissionalização docente, impedindo o compartilhamento do processo de escolarização no espaço comum, público e democrático da escola. Como forma de resistência a tal processo, apresentamos o conceito de comum, proposto por Dardot e Laval, o qual nos permite pensar a escola como espaço inapropriável.

Palavras-chave: *escolarização doméstica, governamentalidade neoliberal conservadora, docência, defesa da escola pública*

To start the conversation

This article was written amidst the world crisis caused by the pandemic of coronavirus (COVID-19), which changed our way of being and living in the world. The idea is to problematize how the proposal of homeschooling underway in Brazil was established considering the social and educational events that marked this historical moment. Homeschooling is discussed in Brazil, at least, since the 1990s, but has gained power in the last years, mainly among the *Projetos de Lei* (PL. In English, bills) proposed in the Chamber of Deputies.

In the middle of this discussion on homeschooling, we were all ravaged by an exceptional global crisis, whose impact, according to Dardot and Laval (2020), is sanitary, economic, and social, and, we add, educational. Faced by the necessary social isolation to which

we are submitted to contain the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), homeschooling takes other configurations and starts to be disseminated in Brazilian homes. Though understanding the differences between a project of homeschooling and the many domestic activities used, we have seen that this moment reveals the fragilities of these homeschooling practices and also offers more element to enact the objective of this article, that is: to problematize the homeschooling proposal underway in Brazil, analyzing some impacts of its implementation. We understand that such a proposal is aligned with a *conservative neoliberal governmentality* (Lockmann, 2020), centered on processes of individualization, exclusion, and accountability of subjects, hindering the sharing of the schooling process in the common space, public and democratic of the school.

We developed this study in two movements: exploration and operation (Bonin, 2006; Possebon, 2020). The exploration movement allows an approximation with the research object “aiming to perceive its contours, specificities, and singularities” (Bonin, 2006, p.35). The author also highlights that this movement “allows us to understand the specificities of the theme, question concepts to consider certain angles that can be observed when dealing with the empirical material” (Possebon, 2002, p. 53).

We develop the exploration movement in the two first sections of this article. After, we present the operation movement in the third and fourth sections, analyzing the discourses of some Bills and the testimonies given by mothers who have experienced homeschooling practices in this moment of social isolation.

We agree with Meyer and Paraíso (2012) that the changes experienced in multiple dimensions of our life also altered our way of researching. It is exactly what we have experiences in this writing process. First, we have defined as an empirical material the proposed Bills underway in the Chamber of Deputies. However, with the Covid-19 crisis and the consequent proliferation of homeschooling practices, we have included as empirical material the testimonies of mothers who experienced this period and its initial effects. We have invited eight mothers to participate, seven replied and authorized the use of their testimonies in this text. They were sent by *e-mail* and *Whatsapp* between March 18 and April 20, 2020, when we finished the study. The analysis shows the specificities and potentials of school as a common space, public and democratic, that cannot be appropriated by the family nor reproduced in the domestic environment.

Homeschooling in Brazil: knowing the bills

In this section, we present some proposed bills on homeschooling in Brazil. This exploration movement is important to understand the atmosphere that surrounds the topic nowadays.

Observing the discourses circulating on the theme in Brazil, we can see different expressions to refer to the proposal: *educação domiciliar*, *ensino domiciliar*, *educação doméstica*, *escolarização doméstica* and the world in English, *homeschooling*. Such diversity of terms does not only indicate a world play, but shows understandings, meanings, and disputes around this polemic proposal. Faced by this, we are supported by Penna (2019) when choosing the expression *escolarização doméstica* (domestic schooling) in the Portuguese version of this text⁵. According to the author “the world schooling was chosen because...it avoids the confusion with the formative processes developed in the family” (p.10) and those that take place “predominantly through teaching in cultural institutions” (Lei nº 9394 de 1996, art. 1º)”. This is relevant because educational practices are and always will be developed at home, however, such project “shows the attempt of families to substitute, in the domestic space, the complex formative processes that take place in schools through teaching” (Penna, 2019, p. 11). This can be seen in the bills about homeschooling as well as in the legal prerogatives published amidst the Covid-19 crisis, which has made more flexible the mandatory school days (MP Nº 934/2020) and open up the possibility to consider homeschool activities in the annual school load (Parecer do CEE - 01/2020)⁶. Faced by this, Penna (2019) suggests we use the word schooling in the place of education to show that it is not related to the development of any educational practice in the domestic environment, but processes of formal schooling.

⁵ Translation note (TN): In the English version of the text, we have opted for the most recurrent term *homeschooling*, thus facilitating readers' understanding.

⁶ We refer here to Provisional Measure Nº 934 April 1, 2020, which waives, exceptionally, the minimum days of school, as long as the minimum annual school load is fulfilled. The school load is established in the dispositives, observing the rules to be edited by the respective educational systems. Regarding the Educational Systems, the Educational Council of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, issue Report 01/2020, which, exceptionally, guides educational institutions on the development of school activities, while continues the prevent measures against the coronavirus – COVID 19. Article 7 highlights that “the situation of the pandemic provoked by the coronavirus – COVID-19, in this period, mobilizes the normative body to regularize, exceptionally and temporarily, the school activities.[...] this Collegiate understands that the current moment is an emergency situation and that the possible alternatives, to validate the 2020 school year, can be done by school activities and/or the reorganization of the School Calendar with in-person activities, when the period of exception finishes”.

On its turn, the author chooses the word domestic to “avoid confusion with the regime of home activities (with school aid), foreseen in the decree-law n° 1044 de 1969 and the laws n° 6.202 from 1975, 6.503 from 1977, and 7.692 from 1988” (Penna, 2019, p. 11). In this aspect, it is worth highlighting that home activities are exceptional, punctual, and allow the continuity of school learning for sick students, or guiding the legislation previously cited in the case of public calamity, as is COVID-19. In these cases, the school space is substituted by the domestic one, even when referring to the mandatory 800 hours of annual school hours. These choices are essential to support our argument that school practices and, therefore, schooling process, and not only education, have their specificities and potentials that can only take place in school, through what we negotiate and share in this common space.

To show the materiality of homeschooling, we highlight the bills currently under discussion in the Chamber of Deputies. In our brief research, we have found 6 projects that were not voted yet. The table below presents the number of the Bill, its author, and content:

Table 1 – Bills on Escolarização Doméstica/ Homeschooling

Proposed bill	Author	Content
PL 6001/2001	Ricardo Izar - PTB/SP ⁷	Provides for homeschooling
PL 3518/2008	Henrique Afonso - PT/AC , Miguel Martini - PHS/MG	Adds a paragraph to art. 81 Law n° 9.394, from December 20, 1996, which establishes the guidelines and framework of national education and provides for homeschooling.
PL 3179/2012	Lincoln Portela - PR/MG	Adds a paragraph to art. 23 Law n° 9.394, from 1996, on the guidelines and framework of national education, to provide for the possibility of offering homeschool for K-12 education.
PL 3261/2015	Eduardo Bolsonaro PSC/SP	Authorizes homeschooling in K-12 education for those under 18 years old, altering the dispositives of Law n° 9.394, from 1996, on the guidelines and framework of national education and Law n° 8.069, from July 13, 1990, on the Child and Youth Statute, and take other measures.
PL 10185/2018	Alan Rick - DEM/AC	Changes Law n° 9.394, from 1996, on the guidelines and framework of national education and Law n° 8.069, 1990, on the Child and Youth Statute, to provide for the possibility of offering homeschool for K-12.
PL 3159/2019	Natália Bonavides - PT/RN	Adds the § 6° to art. 5° of Law, from December 20, 1996 (Law on National Education Guidelines and Framework), to establish that homeschooling cannot substitute school attendance.
PL 2401/2019	Damaraes Alves and Abraham Weintraub	Provides for the right to homeschooling, alters Law n° 8.069, from July 13, 1990, on the Child and Youth Statute, and Law n° 9.394, from December 20, 1996, which establishes the guidelines and basis of national education.
PL 5852/2019	Pastor Eurico - PATRIOTA/PE	Changes Law n° 9.394, from December 20, 1996, to allow K-12 teaching by autonomous tutors.

Note: Table produced by Camila Corrêa Bottero (2019, p. 2) and adapted by the authors.

⁷ T.N: After the politicians' names we have the name of his/her political party or its acronym. The other two letters after the slash refer to the Brazilian state. SP means São Paulo, AC Acre, MG Minas Gerais, RN Rio Grande do Norte, and PE Pernambuco.

In the mentioned bills we can perceive that, recurrently, there is the argument of the legality of offering homeschooling, considering it as a right of parents or guardians. To show this argument, we have chosen some excerpts from the Bills that present this prerogative.

To guarantee in the legislation this alternative is to recognize the right of families to choose how to exercise their educational responsibility towards their children (Lincoln Portela – PL 3179/2012).

Our mandate has always and will always defend the family! Always! Therefore, we decided to present a bill to guarantee that families can choose the best way and place to educate their children, considering the possibility of hiring autonomous tutors for K-12 education. An ancient modality of teaching, tutoring has always been present in the history of education, considering its efficiency and individualized care of the student. Furthermore, this modality strengthens family bonds and allows a greater autonomy of students concerning their pedagogical process, making them the true subjects of the whole educational process. (Pastor Eurico – PL 5852/2019).

Such discourses intend to support the idea that families will have the right to offer homeschooling for children, by building an individual pedagogical plan proposed by parents or guardians, as foreseen in article 4 of PL 2401/2019.

With this in mind, we raised a series of questions: the loss of the common and public character of school education, when depriving children to attend school and what happens only in that space; the primacy of individualization processes, when solely attending the private interests of families and individualize collective phenomena; and the disavowal of teachers' knowledge and its de-professionalization, by allowing parents and guardians to build an individual pedagogical plan. However, considering what we have written, there is something peculiar that needs to be considered: the exclusionary facet of this proposal, by allowing some subjects to not participate in the schooling processes. What is this strange right that supports the exclusion of subjects from school? On this theme, Lockmann (2020) argues that "this is not simply related to the disappearance of the notion of right, but its transformation: school education, previously a universal right, now becomes the result of the individual choices of parents or guardians" (p. 73). Thus, the author highlights two movements: "the first is the transformation of exclusion into a right—the right of families to opt or not for homeschooling—; the second is to transform the right itself in the result of an individual choice that holds subjects responsible for their success or failure ", (p. 73). The author also highlights that "Maybe that is where the greatest danger of contemporary exclusion lies. They do not deny the right, but transform exclusion into a right and the right into an individual choice" (p.73).

In this direction, another bill defends that “homeschooling cannot substitute school attendance, as this is an inalienable part of the subjective public right” (PL 3159/2019). In her justification, the proponent argues that:

When canceling the right of children and adolescents to school education for the benefit of parents’ or guardians’ right to choose the type of instruction provided to their children, homeschooling violates the principle of equality of conditions for the access and permanence in school, as well as the freedom to learn and the plurality of ideas and pedagogical conceptions.

Considering this, we have perceived the disputes and conflicts at stake in the discussions about homeschooling. On one hand, most bills defend homeschooling, supported by the conservative discourse, increasingly popular nowadays in Brazil. On the other, it is a fact that the process to legalize this proposal has not been easy and has faced enough powers and battles to prevent, for now, its approval, as shown in the dossiers written on the theme⁸

The regulation of this legislation, a subject in the current agenda that raises heated discussions in Bolsonaro Government (2019-2022), will possibly trigger movements of fight and resistance between the defenders and the critics of homeschooling. We defend as an educational principle the defense of State offer and the guarantee of the right to public free Education to the whole population, following the 1988 Constitution, the LDB 9394/95, and the National Education Plan (2014-2024). To support this defense, we use the concept of common, by Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, which will be discussed in the next section.

The political principle of common to think public and democratic school

We live nowadays a new face of neoliberal governmentality, which articulates the conservative principles, increasingly more explicit and antidemocratic. Cruz and Macedo (2019, p. 14) highlight that we are maybe living a post-democratic period or even “(un)democratic” one, which also affects the educational field. To the authors, there is an agenda of moral

⁸ Thematic dossier: *Homeschooling* e o direito à educação. (2017). *Pro-Posições*, 28(2), e-ISSN 1980-6248. <https://www.scielo.br/j/pp/i/2017.v28n2/>

Thematic dossier: *Homeschooling*: Controvérsias e perspectivas. (2020). *Práxis Educativa*. 15, eISSN 1809-4309. <https://www.revistas2.uepg.br/index.php/praxiseducativa/issue/view/694>.

conservatism, but also another one that strengthens liberal rationality which consolidate this new governmentality in Brazil.

In this sense, it associates neoliberal principles– entrepreneurship, self-accountability, individualization– to conservative principles – religious intolerance, imposition of family model, and exclusion of certain population groups. According to Cruz and Macedo (2019), the defense of regulating homeschooling would be the highest symbol of the blending of these two agendas. The authors strongly problematize this proposal, highlighting possible effects caused by the approval of this regulation: “conservative guardians would no longer be obliged to send their children to schools and thus “risking” getting in contact with undesirable themes” (p.15). And continue: “Besides this, the State would have diminished its influence to governmentalize in this field and would not be obligated to fund public education” (p.15). The authors explain that if takes place “every and any house would be a potential school, and it would be up to the families to guarantee and fulfill a quality education” (p.15). This could reinforce the “logic of neoliberal competitiveness, also naturalizing an individualistic subjectivity”. We agree that in this context “education would no longer be concerned with the socialization in the difference, neither social justice, but with the logic of individual economic success” (Cruz & Macedo, 2019, p. 15).

We can clearly see from the above that, from a conservative agenda that wants to avoid the contact of children and teenagers with themes, beliefs, and ways of living different from the established model, a neoliberal discourse gets stronger, based on competition, on extreme individualization, and the accountability of subjects. In this logic, the subjects are free to choose how and where to educate their children. This right to choose will be ensured by a proposal such as homeschooling, at the same time, such right holds subjects responsible for their choices. We call this the “privatization of behavior” (Dardot & Laval, 2016).

For the French authors, privatize behavior would be transforming universal rights (such as education, for example) into individual choices and holding subjects responsible for these choices. Such a process can be seen in homeschooling, and becomes the result of an individual choice: to enroll or not children in school.

Faced by the arguments exposed here, we understand homeschooling as a strategy established by this governmentality simultaneously neoliberal and conservative. However, we understand that there is a need to think of resistance strategies against this neoliberal conservative facet, which produces lives marked by practices of exclusion, individualization, and

accountability of subjects. According to Dardot and Laval (2017), an alternative to this rationality can be thought from the *political principle of common*. We use this concept to think school of as a public common space, where there is a sharing of knowledge and experiences that cannot be reproduced anywhere else. It reinforces our argument in favor of school and its specificities and potentialities in the development of the schooling process.

Common for Dardot and Laval (2017) means above all "the government of institutional men and the rules they adopt to organize their relationships" (p. 485). To them, this concept is related with the political tradition of democracy, especially the Greek experience. In this sense, they highlight that the only desirable human world is the one founded explicitly and consciousness in common action, source of rights and obligations, closely connected to what, since the Greeks, we have called justice and friendship.

In the scope of obligations, the authors Dardot and Laval (2017) explain that the *múnus* means, at the same time, the obligations and the activity, explaining that, from the concept of common, the participation in the same activity is a political obligation. According to them "political obligation proceeds entirely from common action, draws power from practical commitment that unites all those who draw together the rules of their activity, and is only valid for the co-participants of the same activity" (p. 617). Such understanding could be related to school as the time and space that allow common action and make participation in the same activity a political obligation. This process cannot be substituted by individualizing practices that will serve private interests.

Another aspect of the common concept that allows us to directly associate it to school, refers to the norm of "non-appropriation" that is, how common cannot be appropriated as something, be it material or immaterial (ideas, information). According to Dardot and Laval (2017) "non-appropriable is not something which nobody can appropriate, that is, something whose appropriation is impossible, but what nobody should appropriate, that is, something whose appropriation is not allowed because should be reserved to common use" (p.619).

When using the concept of *common* to think education, it seems possible to support the argument that school is this non-appropriable space! School is a public and common space that cannot be appropriated. Thus, if school itself is non-appropriable the processes that take place there cannot be reproduced in other spaces, such as the house or family institution, considered that they develop in a space open to creation and invention, which can be only produced when

different voices, subjects, generations, ethnicities, beliefs, and ways of living get together. In this meeting, we understand that participation in collective activity is a political obligation and, as such, is capable of producing school, if not as the unique, but as the most powerful space-time able to support common as a political principle.

A possible analytical exercise: dealing with documents and narratives

From the analysis of some bills under discussion in the Chamber of Deputies and a collection of reports from mothers who have experienced the materialization of homeschooling amidst the coronavirus crisis, we have built two units of analysis. Such units allow us to produce a type of resistance in two moments, which seem key for this neoliberal conservative governmentality. In the first of them, we resist the processes of individualization produced by the movements of homeschooling, showing the potential of school as a democratic space to meet the other. In the second, the mothers' testimonies allow us to think about the specificities of teaching and the need for a pedagogical formation to enact school work.

School as a public and democratic space to meet the other

The option of parents and guardians to adopt homeschooling trespass many reasons, ideological, social, moral, ethical, based on beliefs, among many others, which are established as a fundamental right and, thus, should not be mitigated by the State. The simple coexistence in a multigrade school environment, with the presence of children and teenagers of different ages, in itself causes concern and restlessness regarding violence, drugs, early sexuality, bullying, cultural and religious values, etc., to which the State is not able to protect the students as the families wish. (Eduardo Bolsonaro – PL 3261/2015)

Our proposal is to guarantee to families the option to provide homeschooling and social contact in circles chosen by them, aiming to guarantee the education for the development of the human being. (Eduardo Bolsonaro – PL 3261/2015.).

To force the child and the teenager to attend school is to subject them to daily face violence, drug use and, mainly, a pedagogical guidance that does not always benefit the philosophical, ethical, and religious conviction of certain families. (Ricardi Izar, PL, 6001/2001.)

The discourses selected clearly show the relation between the bills and the conservative agenda that guides contemporary governmentality. Whether supported by so-called moral, ethical, or religious principles, or by defending a type of “family”, or even using bullying or issues related to violence, drugs, and sexuality, school is presented by these discourses as a dangerous place, that exposes children and young people to “undesirable” social circles and all that these can entail.

In this context, school becomes the target of a series of accusations that show the fear and, even, the hatred towards it and towards democracy. School becomes dangerous, as the experience lived in that space and time is uncontrollable, not limited to the expectations of the family, of society, and even of the teachers. Would the fear and hatred for school not be associated to our lack of control on the destiny of the new generation, on the social roles we attribute to young people and the expectations we build to their future? Would that be a fear of the unknown, of the lack of control on the destiny of the world?

In the understanding of Dussel et al. (2017), this fear of school would be related to “the fear that the coming generation will in fact become a new generation, and that this coming generation would question, directly or indirectly, what adults value and consider as a given” (p. 165). In other words, this fear of school refers to the fear of its potency to create other possible worlds, different and distant from the predictability of adults.

The bills analyzed show, at least, three facets of this fear materialized in criticisms towards school: 1. Fear that school will not correspond to the expectations, values, and beliefs of the family or of an older generation; 2. Fear of exposing children and young people to bullying and violence; and 3. Fear of socializing children with subjects different from those the family believes to be the best, that is, a sociability outside the circles chosen by each family. These three dimensions of fear have a point of connection: the relation with the other, with those different from me, who have other values, beliefs, other ways of living. In this sense, homeschooling presents itself as a strategy to protect children and young people and also control their ways of living, being, and socializing with the world. It is a strategy to control the dangers found in the plurality of school.

The issue we place here is how we see plurality: is it something negative that needs to be overcome or a possibility of human growth and improvement? Arendt (2007) tells us that the difficult of human interaction comes from the fact that “men, and not a man, live on Earth

and inhabit the world “(p. 7). This makes us face the existence of plurality and difference as a permanent element in our relations and human interactions. The central issue here is to reflect about how we will perceive and understand this plurality of human interactions: as a problem to be solved by consensus and by ‘sameness’, or as a potential to produce subjectivities that can arise from the relationships with the other and with the world?

Biesta (2013), from the analysis of Honig, makes an important distinction between how the theoreticians of virtue and the theoreticians of *virtù* see plurality. To him, the first conceive plurality and difference as a difficulty or a problem, understanding it as an obstacle to social life, as a disturbance, and a weakness, while the theoreticians of *virtù* see plurality as something central to human interactions and social life.

Based on this argument, we can understand that homeschooling can work as a strategy to avoid socialization by dissent and by plurality. On this, Becker et al. (2020) highlight that around a quarter of families that remove their children from formal educational institutions and opt for homeschooling justify it with reasons related to bad socialization, the non-adaptation to school context, difficulties of interaction with classmates and teachers, the feeling of not belonging, conflicts, among others. Faced by this, the authors question if “instead of removing children from a conflict situation, it would not be more constructive to help build elements that allow them to overcome challenges” (p. 5).

School is a space of meeting with the different – different voices, different subjects, different generations, different ethnicities, different beliefs, and ways of living. Certainly homeschooling does not prevent socialization practices. We agree that school is not the only space of socialization and neither should be. For long we have supported this argument when affirming that children socialize in different places. However, we agree with Penna (2019) when the author highlights that:

Socialization in the English course or in the club cannot guarantee this plurality of the public sphere, because there are only people from the same social class. Much less the socialization that takes place in Churches, because they will only socialize with people that subscribe to the same religious belief. It is a socialization closed in the consensus that aims to annul the void or the supplement. (p. 26)

Homeschooling can produce a socialization of consensus, that reaffirms only one way of living, strengthens family values and beliefs, prevents the subject to know and live with other possible worlds, reinforcing processes of individualization, and answering immediately the

individual needs and interests of children, young people, and their families. Such processes of individualization, self-discipline, and self-education can, once again, be perceived in the statements of some bills:

Homeschooling allows to adequate the teaching-learning processes to the needs of each child and allows a space of intense contact and education or mutual learning for the family. It is this, thus, reinforcing the irreplaceable educational role of the family in the education of their children. Family is the main gear of education and homeschooling, besides broadening the array of opportunities of schooling children and teenagers favors an integrated management between it and the school with a redistribution of responsibilities. Besides this, it favors the development of self-discipline and learning how to learn, qualities avidly sought by professionals nowadays. (Henrique Afonso & Miguel Martini - PL 3518/2008. Our highlights).

An ancient modality of teaching, tutoring has always been present in the history of education, considering its efficiency and individualized care of the student. Furthermore, this modality strengthens family bonds and allows a greater autonomy of students concerning their pedagogical process, making him/her the true subject of the whole educational process. (Pastor Eurico - PL 5852/2019. Our highlights).

Individualization, self-discipline, self-education are discourses in synch with the conservative neoliberal rationality that grounds our days. The idea to allow greater autonomy of students regarding their own pedagogical process is consonant with the neoliberal assumptions to form a self-manager, responsible for their formative pathway, individual choices, and their own life. To Dardot and Laval (2016), the figure of the citizen invested in a collective responsibility disappears in this new reason-world and gives space to the entrepreneur-men. This man-company, invested with an individual freedom to make his/her own choices, is no longer a citizen, but a self-entrepreneur that harvests the results of his/her own individual efforts. In these practices, the process of privatization of behavior materializes itself (Dardot & Laval, 2016) in, at least, three axes: through the exclusion of subjects from the practices of socialization by dissent – experience of contact with plurality and difference; through the emphasis on individualization practices, that place individuals, their wishes, and needs in the center of the educational process; and by practices that hold the subjects accountable, which should bear the results and risks of their choices. The first two axes have already been shown in the discourses so far; we will now deal with the third axis.

To do so, we would like to resume the double argument we presented in the beginning of this text and move forward. Based on the ideas of Lockmann (2020), we support that in this neoliberal conservative governmentality the notion of right does not disappear, but changes.

The first axis of this double argument refers, then, to the fact that exclusion itself— the fact of not attending school — becomes a right — the right of families to opt or not for homeschooling. The second axis of this double argument aims to understand this notion of right is no longer universal nor assumes a collective, but changes itself in the result of individual choices. In this point we can see the operation of this dyad freedom-accountability.

Through the proposal of homeschooling, it is clear that the priority given to the right of parents and guardians on the choice of this type of instruction that will be provided to their children. In § 1º article 2º, PL 2401/2019 affirms that " Parents and guardians are *completely free* to choose between school education and homeschooling, in the terms of this Law" (p.1. Our highlights). However, this right as an individual choice has an effect, typical of neoliberal rationality: the accountability of subjects. The same PL also says:

Art. 4º The option for homeschooling will be formally made by students' parents or guardians through the virtual platform of the Ministry of Education, which will contain, at least: [...]. III – term of accountability on the choice of homeschooling signed by parents or legal guardians; (Damares Alves & Abraham Weintrub - PL 2401/2019. Our highlight).

Art. 6º The student enrolled in homeschooling will be submitted, for the purpose of learning certification, to an annual evaluation under the management of the Ministry of Education. § 1st The learning certification will be based on the content of the school year corresponding to the age of the student, according to the Base Nacional Comum Curricular [National Curriculum Framework] with the possibility of advancing the courses and grades, in the terms established by Law nº 9.394, from December 20, 1996. § 2º The annual evaluation will be applied from the 2nd year of K-12, preferably in October (...). § 3º If the student is not present in the evaluation, the parents or guardians will justify the absence. § 4º In the case of justified absences, the evaluation will be reapplied in a date defined in an act by the Ministry of Education. Art. 7º If the performance of the student in the evaluation described in art.6 is considered unsatisfactory, a remedial test will be offered. (Damares Alves & Abraham Weintrub - PL 2401/2019. Our highlight)

The accountability term that should be signed by the parents and the evaluations that will be developed to measure the efficiency of homeschooling show the evaluation role of a Neoliberal State and the process of accountability of the individuals for their choices. If the choices are individual, the risks that come from such choices are also individual. In the neoliberal rationality, "any decision, be it medical, schooling, or professional belongs completely to the individual right...The individualistic ethics is dealt with as an opportunity to place all the *costs* on the shoulders of the subject through mechanisms of risk transfer that are not natural" (Dardot & Laval, 2016, p. 350). The authors highlight that the risks to which the subjects are

submitted are increasingly less social risks, assumed by a certain State policy, and more individual risks. According to them, the “responsibility of individuals does not make them only responsible: they should answer for their behavior from the scale of measures given by the services to manage human resources and by managers” (p. 351). Such a process becomes evident in the evaluations preconized by the bills, evaluations that should measure, through scales and parameters, the efficiency of individual choices made by the parents or guardians when opting for homeschooling. With this proposal, the State exempts itself from a double responsibility: offering obligatory education and managing the risks for the bad results in the schooling process. It is not only a privatization of behavior, but the privatization of risks and the individualization of destinies (Dardot & Laval, 2016).

The discussions developed here show the articulation of the proposal of homeschooling as a form of government based in neoliberal principles of individualization and accountability of subjects, but perhaps does not make clear the connections with a conservative agenda. Since the beginning of this text, we highlight the union of these agendas. We do not see a discrepancy between neoliberalism and neo-conservatism. Following the same direction of Dardot and Laval (2016) when pointing out that a superficial analysis could lead us to believe that we are faced by a double game, in which the highly moralizing content of conservatism could seem incompatible with the amoral character of neoliberal rationality. On the contrary, the authors argue that:

In fact, between neoliberalism and neo-conservatism there is a non-fortuitous agreement: if neoliberal rationality raises the company to the model of subjectivation, it is simply because the form-company is the “cellular form” of moralizing the worker, as well as the family is the “cellular form” of children’s moralization” (Dardot & Laval, 2016, p. 388).

Though the authors do not specifically discuss homeschooling, it is exactly in it that we find the way these two moralization processes articulate. It gathers in a sole project the moralization of children, through the discourse of fear of school, and the moralization of workers, through the creation of subjects responsible for themselves, and the risks of their own existence. The combination of these two agendas and the emphasis given to the processes of individualization and accountability of subjects weakens the collective instances and rejects school as a public space, common and democratic.

The analyses developed here show us the non-appropriation of common, as we initially highlighted in this article. School, as a common, public, and democratic space is non-

appropriate, because it is not possible to reproduce at home what takes place in the school context – the human interactions in that space and the learning produced in and through the relationship with the other. However, while such a project announces discourses that underestimate public school, supported in moral and religious fundamentalist and individualization practices of subjects, the testimonies of mothers collected in social media, in this moment of social isolation, reaffirm a movement to defend school and teachers.

In the defense of teachers' specificity

In this moment of COVID-19 pandemic, homeschooling assumes its own characteristics: family overload with home office and children at home making online/distant learning activities sent by the school, compulsory and not as an option. It is worth mentioning that these children and young people are mostly from private schools, as, in this period, the emergency of most public schools, who attend poor communities, was to feed students.

However, even with its peculiarities, the moment seems fruitful to think about homeschooling, especially the load given to mothers to play the role of teachers. It is not our aim to develop a discussion on gender in this article, though it is pertinent and necessary. Nevertheless, we think it is important to bring up three narratives that sum up how mothers have been perceiving homeschooling in this period. A mother reports “My husband is in the system of *home office*. He works in a private company and needs to follow a schedule, he participates in meetings with people around the world and, because of that, he can't be interrupted. The thing, for him, is less flexible than to me” (Mother 3). She continues “Well, of course, we add to that gender issues and stuff (I was joking, but quite seriously, with a friend, that the *home office* works on women's backs, right?). The education of our son is, therefore, in my hands right now” (Mother 3).

In another part, she reports in a group of “Mothers of the school” in *Whatsapp* how she perceives the moment: “On a weekend, 8 mothers out of 17, said they couldn't do anything and felt guilty” (Mother 3). This showed that “there was pain in the discussion, because everyone wants to be the best mother, the one who makes her children happy and can make the best interventions, but this was not possible for a good part of us.” (Mother 3) So the mother makes

a question that refers to the specificity of teaching: “The little I’ve been able to do, has to do with a lot of organization, a lot of dedication *and, there is a reason why not everyone chooses to be a teacher, right?* (Mother 3. Our highlight).

Another mother vents during her testimony: “the routine at home is very different from the school, here I’m not a pedagogue, just the mother that doesn’t want to be worn out with the lessons, I rather enjoy the boys by playing” (Mother 4). The testimony of another mother also calls attention to the difference of routine between the home and the school. She exemplifies that a routine organized for a day in the school of her 7-year-old daughter takes much longer at home: “Today, a month later, the routines [organized for a day] are taking one week!!! What happens? The attention, the interest, and the focus are not the same” (Mother 7). She justifies what happens: “Coping the notebook tires, the TV calls attention, the mothers’ tasks (that are also working online), sometimes school [tasks] have to change places and attention”. The narrator refers to another situation: at home there are no classmates. One day she questioned her daughter “if the school tasks at home were not as fun as at school”. The answer was: “But mom, here, there isn’t (classmate’s name) to tell jokes, not my friends to talk”. She ponders: “we’re trying to bring school to our living rooms!!! We are trying to transfer school life to home” (Mother 7).

Besides the accountability of mothers and the impossibility of transferring “school life” to domestic life, there is a common aspect raised that we are interested to discuss in this section; the specificity of teaching. This is not only a narrative of the mothers. One of them highlighted that the fathers also perceive this common aspect and has sent us an article. “Educating is not only an intuitive task”, reports a father in an opinion article published in a widely-read national newspaper (RATIER, 2020, n.p.). The author makes several school activities with his two children, one of 5 years old and another of 9. We sum up the argument presented in this section paraphrasing the author: the process of schooling is also not an intuitive task. It requires specific formation.

Nonetheless, it is not only in the mothers’ testimonies that we have seen this aspect. In the bills analyzed we have found few references to the enactment of homeschooling and the specificity of knowing how to teach. One of the justifications states that “even in countries that accept this type of education, it faces difficulties or obstacles of implementation”. In the argument, the writer of the bill gives as an example that “the state of California, *started to demand*

a teaching degree diploma for parents who intend to choose this type of education for their children”. (Lincoln Portela - PL 3179/2012. Our highlights).

Still in the minute of the Provisional Measure, PL 2401/2019⁹, submitted by the president, created together with the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights and by the Ministry of Education, there is the defense of several possibilities to enact homeschooling. They highlight that “in many cases, the parents directly conduct the educational activities with their children, with no other people; in other situations, besides the parents and guardians, *also specialist professionals* cooperate in specific activities” (Damares Regina Alves, Abraham Weintraub - PL 2401/2019, p. 7. Our highlight).

If, on one hand, “the movement to regulate homeschooling ignores the movement to build the profession of teachers, the movements to organize education workers in Brazilian society since the 19th century” (Rosa & Camargo, 2020, p. 14); on the other hand, the excerpts of bills, when exemplifying that other countries demand a teaching degree or that parents are aided by specialized professionals, recognize the need of a specific formation to teach.

Besides the formation in the area of knowledge and the appropriation and development of pedagogical knowledge, the option for the appropriate way to teach students demand “understanding teaching as interaction and never as transmission” merely technical (Seffner et al., 2018, p.91). This is the condition to implement what the authors characterize as “pedagogical sensibilities or tact”, that teacher mobilize to make classes happen “so as the voices find the necessary conditions to circulate, from the knowledge, tensions, curiosities, and imagination materialized into questions, concerns, and wishes” (Seffner et al., 2018, p.91) of students and teachers.

Everyday a teaching knowledge is built through a “thought or language typical of our work connected to the knowledge produced and accumulated when working” (Larrosa, 2018, p. 24). The knowledge produced in the experience of teaching establishes an “immaterial pedagogical heritage” (Camini & Piccoli, 2014), enacted to produce teaching and learning proposals considering the heterogeneity of the classes.

Summing up, we perceived an ambivalent process in our analysis: if, on one hand, homeschooling is articulated with neoliberal principles of individualization and accountability

⁹ For a discussion on the proposed Bill N° 2401/2019 see Wendler and Flach (2020).

of subjects; on the other, it is in in this rationality that we are immersed that we can glimpse the power of teachers' specific formation. A power materialized by a teaching *ethos* and by teachers' work as a craft. Teaching *ethos* is produced in the formation "towards the care of oneself and of the other, allowing new ways to produce oneself and the relationships with others" (Fabris & Dal'igna, 2015, p. 81). That is, to sideline individualization and the accountability of the student or the teacher and prioritize collective construction, the care to learn, materialized in the ways students' think, in the mistakes as pathways to develop new types of reasoning and the difficulties as opportunities to propose other pedagogical practices of teaching and learning.

Craft is another side of teacher performance, it is mainly concerned with the performances in large scale assessments and following the content established by normative curriculum policies as *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (BNCC- National Curriculum Framework), in an acritical and fast way. The craft of teachers' job "refers to mastery, when being a teacher, to the ways of doing embodied in the sensitive knowledge of materials, in the convenient use of artifacts, in the precision of gestures, in the adequacy of vocabulary that names all this" (Rechia & Larrosa, 2019, p. 40). Teachers' craft is not only the transmission of knowledge, there is "incorporated knowledge, embodied in the body itself" (Rechia & Larrosa, 2019, p. 40).

To finish the conversation

After the exploration and operation movements to reach our proposed objective – problematize the proposal of homeschooling underway in Brazil, analyzing some impacts of its implementation – we argue that school and teaching, collectively lived in school space and time, cannot be appropriated by the family nor reproduced in the domestic environment. In this sense, we join teachers and researchers, many of which quoted during this article, who defend collective instances, such as school, and teaching as a public, common, and democratic space.

Thus, from this position emerges the question: who is interested in defending homeschooling? Homeschooling will continue, as has been happening historically, for the elites, for the families with maids to help with the homework, who can hire specialized teachers to teach their children certain contents who the parents do not know? What about poor families that wish to assume homeschooling, what will they do? Will the task be assumed by religious institutions or by non-governmental organizations?

It is possible that future studies on the COVID-19 pandemic might show limits and possibilities of homeschooling we have not even considered!

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