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## ***The rise of the School Without Party movement and the denunciations against the “indoctrinating teachers” in Brazil***

*El auge del movimiento Escuela Sin Partido y las denuncias contra los "maestros adoctrinados" en Brasil*

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### **Abstract**

The rise of right-wing populism in several countries has directly impacted the educational field, especially teaching work. This phenomenon is linked to what has been called the post-truth era, in which there is a profound questioning about the pedagogical autonomy of teachers and their ability to arbitrate the truth. In this article, we analyze the performance of the Escola sem Partido - ESP (School Without Party) movement in Brazil through its denunciations against the "indoctrinating teachers." It is concluded that ESP seeks to resize the limits of teaching work, moving it from the debate of the academic and scientific community to the moral values of the students' families, a movement that gained strength in the process of political polarization experienced in Brazil in recent years, and with the election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018. It stands out how in the context of post-truth ESP elaborates a false equivalence between the scientific knowledge accumulated in certain fields and the moral values elaborated from a conservative agenda.

**Key words:** educational policy; Brazil; curriculum; teacher's role; expertise.

### **Resumen**

La ascensión del populismo de derecha en varios países ha impactado directamente en el ámbito educativo, especialmente en el trabajo docente. Este fenómeno se vincula con lo que se ha denominado la era de la postverdad, en la que existe un profundo cuestionamiento sobre la autonomía pedagógica de los profesores y su capacidad de arbitrar la verdad. En este artículo analizamos la actuación del movimiento Escola sem Partido - ESP (Escuela sin Partido) en Brasil a través de sus denuncias contra los "docentes adoctrinadores". Se concluye que la ESP busca redimensionar los límites del trabajo docente, trasladándolo del debate de la

comunidad académica y científica en dirección a los valores morales de las familias de los estudiantes, movimiento que ganó fuerza en el proceso de polarización política vivido en Brasil en los últimos años, y con la elección de Jair Bolsonaro en 2018. Se destaca cómo en el contexto de la postverdad la ESP elabora una falsa equivalencia entre el conocimiento científico acumulado en determinados campos y los valores morales elaborados desde una agenda conservadora.

**Palabras clave:** política educativa; Brasil; plan de estudios; papel del maestro; pericia.

## 1. Introduction

If the emergence of expert systems characterizes modernity, implying a substantive shift to how the truth was managed in pre-modern societies (Giddens, 1991). This deep questioning has been taking place in more recent years about the autonomy of teaching work, and their ability to arbitrate on the topics on which they are specialists draws attention (Peters, 2017). I understand this movement as a broader reflection of what has been called the post-truth era, which is also articulated and enhanced with the rise of populism in different national contexts.

Although the questioning of teaching authority is not new, especially in the history of Brazilian education – the persecutions of Paulo Freire (1921-1997) during the military dictatorship are an emblematic example – it is the post-truth that makes visible the overlapping of emotions and personal beliefs above objective facts, reinforcing the false equivalence between scientific/academic knowledge and moral values.

I am interested in this article to explore the clashes that have emerged in the recent period involving the autonomy of teaching work and the frequent accusations of ideological indoctrination in schools (Zan and Krawczyk, 2019). Despite this being a global phenomenon, I intend to analyze this issue from the Brazilian case, in which two events have been interpreted as significant challenges for the pedagogical work of teachers in different parts of the country: a) the creation in 2004 of the *Escola sem Partido* (School Without Party<sup>1</sup>) movement, and its growing performance and visibility; b) the election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018, and the attacks and threats that have been carried out since then on teaching work.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the proposal of the School Without Party movement and the content of the denunciations against teachers accused of ideological indoctrination that is published on the official website of this movement. This is an activist group that tries to act in the educational field, aiming to avoid "ideological indoctrination" in schools, which has found strong support from right-wing politicians in Brazil. I seek to understand the clashes in the Brazilian educational field and how the greater visibility of this movement is related to the process of political polarization in Brazil and the rise of right-wing populism, represented mainly by the government of Jair Bolsonaro. In theoretical terms, I intend to dialogue with the literature produced about the post-truth, as it recognizes the explanatory relevance of this phenomenon to understand the questions of teachers' pedagogical autonomy.

It is relevant to point out that School Without Party can be situated among other moral panics internationally, which started to gain more prominence with social media (Rodwell, 2020).

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes School Without Party is translated as Nonpartisan School, but this translation downplays the idea of direct exclusion and repression of political expression, implying the false impression of neutrality.

However, as Miskolci (2021) points out, although we can verify a global agenda around these issues, these moral panics tend to assume local agendas connected to the sociopolitical transformations that have taken place in different national contexts. Although we can indicate that these moral panics have a long tradition, as in the case of anti-communist propaganda during the cold war, whose ideas are shared by neoconservative movements internationally, our emphasis in this article is on situating School Without Party in the context of transformations occurred in Brazil in a recent period.

In methodological terms, it is important to indicate that the "testimonies" and "articles" were chosen that were more directly related to the teaching of social sciences and the two main topics explored in the "complaints": "gender ideology" and "critique of capitalism." There are other types of materials on the site, which relate to practices in universities, for example, but I am more directly interested in the "complaints" that directly affect the pedagogical practice of professors, thus enabling a critique of the movement on how these teachers should teach. After a brief period of deactivation of the site in 2020, it was reactivated in 2021, indicating that it is no longer under the responsibility of founder Miguel Nagib.

For a better understanding by the reader of the work to be analyzed, the text will be organized in four more sections: a) presentation of the debate on education and post-truth; b) synthesis of the process of political polarization and the rise of right-wing populism in Brazil; c) presentation and examination of the School Without Party movement; d) analysis of the types of complaints against teachers accused of ideological indoctrination disclosed on the movement's website; and, finally, the final remarks. As this article was written for a foreign audience, I tried to emphasize the general context that we are living in Brazil, specially the sociopolitical context.

## **2. Education and post-truth**

The post-truth theme gained much visibility in the public debate, mainly from 2016 with the election of Donald Trump in the United States and the Brexit movement in Europe. According to McIntyre (2018), the post-truth refers to a phenomenon in which the facts matter less than the emotional appeal or personal beliefs so that the "post" refers to the loss of relevance of the truth in the public arena, and not in a temporal sense. Still, according to McIntyre (2018), post-truth would affirm ideological supremacy by which its practitioners try to compel someone to believe in something, regardless of the evidence.

As Simondo (2017) explains to us, referring to the case of American politics, although some claim that American politicians have been in the post-truth era for a long time, he indicates that they do not, because in the rules of the democratic game normally politicians "just" distort the truth, and when caught lying they tend to produce excuses or justifications for their actions. For the author, the Trump campaign abandoned these rules of the democratic game as we know it, and the truth is no longer relevant in this process.

In the field of education nowadays there is a strong questioning of academic and school knowledge (Wight, 2018), which is now confronted with personal opinions and subjective assessments of social reality. Still, according to Wight (2018, p. 25):

While democracy might be a political principle worth defending, there is a tension between it and the democratisation of epistemology. Democracy needs a population sufficiently well-educated to be able to sift through the arguments and reach informed judgements. This was the great hope of Enlightenment liberalism, particularly concerning the provision of education. Increased access to education would bring progress and peace. A highly educated populace would make democracy function better. Even though by any standards western populations are now better educated than in Kant's time, we seem to be regressing rather than progressing in terms of democratic practice. This is the post-truth paradox. The more educated societies have become, the more dysfunctional democracy seems to be. The supposed positive link between democracy, education and knowledge seems to be broken.

Breaking this supposed link between democracy, education, and knowledge also has implications for changing the democratic game. It means that in the public debate involving more controversial issues to be incorporated into the school curriculum – such as gender and sexuality, feminism, racism, xenophobia – in the post-truth era personal opinions, and values are often elevated to a status superior to scientific evidence in the definition of educational policies. This scenario deepens mainly in right-wing populist governments, which tend to place such guidelines as attacks on "traditional values," mainly in terms of family and nation.

In this context, scientific denialism and attempts to rewrite and reinterpret the historical past and the social reality of the present have direct implications for school education. The rise of such a perspective has generated clashes between different agents in the educational field since the "commitment to veracity" remains central to education (Young and Muller, 2007). However, the question now arises as to which are the legitimate agents who could arbitrate about the school's veracity.

Peters (2017) analyzes post-truth as a global phenomenon, which has demonstrated its strength in recent socio-political events. Still, according to the author, in this context, emotional arguments gain strength in the face of evidence-based arguments, directly affecting the educational field. Still, according to him, one of the consequences of this scenario is the attack on teachers' professional autonomy in arbitrating about the truth.

Unlike what traditionally happens in the context of academic and school knowledge, in the post-truth regime, truths are produced and disseminated through mimetic citationality, with a circulation of information without reference to a source, so that ambiguity is an integral part of its performative efficacy (Cesarino, 2020). Therefore, it is important to understand how these two different logics of knowledge production operate since anti-intellectualism, and the questioning of experts are a fundamental part of the post-truth regime (Block, 2018). This does not mean, however, that the rise of new intellectuals in this context does not occur, taking the case of the Brazilian as an example, figures such as Olavo de Carvalho, Reinaldo Azevedo, Rodrigo Constantino, among others, stand out, but which substantially differ from the profile "traditional" of the intellectual strongly linked to an academic culture<sup>2</sup> (Rodrigues, 2018).

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<sup>2</sup> These intellectuals linked to right-wing and extreme-right movements in Brazil often do not have any academic training, as in the case of Olavo de Carvalho. Furthermore, these intellectuals tend not to dialogue with well-established and recognized authors in the field of human and social sciences, preferring instead to dialogue with less "mainstream" thinkers, in line with more heterodox ideas, including forms of science denial. Olavo de Carvalho is also called "Professor Olavo" for offering online courses in philosophy and publishing books that have become popular among political agents on the right-wing and extreme-right in Brazil.

Amid the questions posed in this debate, it is also perceived that the teaching of human and social sciences is especially sensitive to such events. Attacks on the teaching of such sciences are observed in different parts of the world, which seek to empty the sense of academic knowledge dedicated to understanding the social world, questioning its "usefulness" or even its "political purposes" (Lahire, 2016), as is evident in the attacks that Bolsonaro carried out in this field when announcing possible cuts in the funding of the "Faculties of Philosophy and Sociology" (Blois and Oliveira, 2019; Oliveira, 2020). Such issues are linked to the existing barriers and resistance to incorporating a more progressive perspective of teaching social studies (Evans, 2020).

### 3. From political polarization to the rise of Bolsonarism in Brazil

For many analysts, the so-called June 2013 protests (also known in Brazil as *Jornadas de Junho*) are a key point to understand the socio-political changes that have occurred in Brazil in recent times<sup>3</sup>, especially concerning the growing political polarization that permeated the 2014 presidential election, becoming radicalized in the 2018 election. Analyzing the phenomenon in a period immediately after its events, Braga (2013) makes the following reading: "Regardless of the 2014 elections, the June protests were not a cry for 'more of the same'. We argued above that the current wave of mobilizations meant the resumption of the struggle of the precarious Brazilian proletariat for their social rights" (Braga, 2013, p. 58).

This uncertain and open scenario is interpreted by Gondim (2016), based on the contradictions and the originality of the scenario that had hitherto been marked by the hegemony of a party – *Partido os Trabalhadores*-PT (Workers Party) – that came to power with the support from different social movements. However, according to the author, the PT had an ambivalent performance, considering that there was a greater integration of large contingents of the population with consumption during the Lula and Dilma governments, but that, on the other hand, concerning improving access to quality public goods and services, these governments left something to be desired.

In any case, there seems to be some convergence among analysts that the June protests represented a turning point in Brazilian political activism (Bringel and Pleyers, 2015). On the other hand, Valente et al. (2020) point out that since the June protests, Brazil has experienced a state of permanent mobilization, which included protests against mega-events (FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Summer Olympics in 2016), the demonstrations favorable and contrary to the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff<sup>4</sup>, as well as the demonstrations favorable and contrary to the arrest of former President Lula. It is also observed that, although there are some elements in common between the June 2013 demonstrations and those carried out in the following years,

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<sup>3</sup> The June 2013 protests, known as the *Jornadas de Junho* (June Journeys), were a series of mass mobilizations that took place in more than 500 Brazilian cities. The protests had as their initial motto the discontent with the increase in public transport fares, also incorporating other agendas such as the end of police violence and the improvement of public services. During this period there was also a critical drop in the popularity of President Dilma Rousseff.

<sup>4</sup> We use the term impeachment because it is the most recurrent in the legal system; however, it is important to emphasize that there is an intense debate in the community of political analysts about the character of this event, being repeatedly interpreted as a coup.

there is a relevant, distinctive element that refers to the fact that the most recent demonstrations in Brazil have taken on a more partisan character (Valente et al., 2020).

Burity (2020), when examining the advancement of the conservative wave in Brazil in a recent period, indicates the June protests as a fundamental milestone of this process, since initially, they had as their main banner the protests against the increase in urban transport tariffs, soon turned into a massive demonstration against the federal government and the PT. Therefore, these protests could be considered a key point for understanding the political shift experienced in Brazil, which resulted in the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and the election of Bolsonaro in 2018.

As well pointed out by Schwarcz and Starling (2018), the tendency of consolidation of democratic institutions in Brazil seems to have started to unravel from 2012, a process that accelerated between 2015 and 2017 so that the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff opened up the depth of the crisis that was taking place in the country.

It is important to remember that Jair Bolsonaro was still a federal deputy when Dilma Rousseff was impeached, having voted in favor of her dismissal. At the time, he said that it was a day of glory for the Brazilian people. Before announcing his vote, he dedicated his vote to the following elements:

For the family and the innocence of children in the classroom that the PT never had. Against communism, for our freedom, against the São Paulo Forum, for the memory of Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, the dread of Dilma Rousseff. For the army of Caxias, for our armed forces, for Brazil above everything, and God above everyone, my vote is yes. (Author translation).

It is interesting to note the set of elements that Bolsonaro evoked at that time, allowing him to embody the desires of conservative groups, either by direct reference to the fight against communism, also associated with the defense of individual freedoms or by indirect reference to the fight against gender ideology (“For the innocence of children in the classroom”). The mention of Colonel Brilhante Ustra (1932-2015), who was in 2008 the first military man condemned by the Brazilian justice for the practice of torture during the military dictatorship, reinforces his place alongside those who defended and defend the return of the military dictatorship, who in a short period passed from minority voices to protagonists of protests organized in Brazil (Schwarcz and Starling, 2018).

According to Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco (2020), it is important to realize that the inclusion produced by the PT government occurred mainly via consumption, so that the economic crisis added to the austerity agenda of the government of Michel Temer, who assumed the presidency after the impeachment by Dilma Rousseff, interrupted the cycle of this inclusion. In this context, joining the Bolsonaro for president campaign could be understood mainly from the following elements: “This candidate represented both the great promise of restoring social order and an opportunity to reconcile the crisis of personhood prevalent among men during the peak of the national crisis”. (Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco, 2020, p. 21).

The relationship between political polarization and the rise of Bolsonarism, representing part of the phenomenon that Cesarino (2020) called digital populism, also unfolds in the process

of democratic inflection, within the pendular movement of Brazilian democracy, in the terms analyzed by Avritzer (2018).

In this context, the School Without Party movement has gained even more prominence, finding a strong adhesion between governors and elected deputies who declare support for Bolsonaro<sup>5</sup>. This phenomenon, however, is not a linear movement as we will see later, given the contradictions between the movement's proposal and the proposals in terms of educational policy under the Bolsonaro government, in addition to the institutional obstacles encountered. We are interested here to highlight the socio-political exchange scenario experienced in Brazil and how it frames the greater visibility that the School Without Party movement starts to assume, legitimizing and reinforcing its discourse in the public sphere.

#### **4. School Without Party: the denunciation movement against the "indoctrinating teachers"**

School Without Party movement was created in 2004 by lawyer Miguel Nagib, gaining greater prominence from 2015, when in the context of the socio-political changes experienced in Brazil – as analyzed in the previous section – bills of law inspired by the proposal defended by the movement in city councils, legislative assemblies, and the National Congress.

The creation of the School Without Party in 2004 can be understood as a reaction to the progressive agenda of the PT which had assumed the presidency in 2003. Although the PT has not managed to consolidate a broad progressive agenda in education, there were indications in this direction, such as the creation of the *Secretaria de Educação Continuada, Alfabetização, Diversidade e Inclusão – SECADI* (Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion)<sup>6</sup> in 2004, which emerged linked to the demands of social movements, and carried out an important articulation between the field of education and the demands of different minorities. In any case, the movement at first was more focused on combating the so-called "Marxist indoctrination" in schools, later incorporating the combat against "gender ideology" (Miskolci, 2018, 2021).

According to Irineu (2014), even though the LGBT movement in Brazil has articulated numerous demands in the public sphere since the 1980s, it was from Lula's first term in office (2003-2006) that these agendas began to be effectively incorporated into the scope of public policies by the federal government. This scenario in the educational field gained prominence during the first term of Dilma Rousseff (2011-2014) when the Ministry of Education tried to implement the School without Homophobia program, which consisted of a set of teaching materials produced by a non-governmental organization in partnership with the Ministry of Human Rights, which aimed to combat LGBTphobia at school. This material became known by the media as the "gay kit,"<sup>7</sup> a demon given by the then federal deputy Jair Bolsonaro (as well as the

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<sup>5</sup> Calçada (2018).

<sup>6</sup> Bolsonaro during his first year as president ended the activities of this secretariat.

<sup>7</sup> This material was the target of numerous fake news. For example, Jair Bolsonaro stated that the book *Aparelho Sexual e Cia* (Sexual Apparatus e Cia) was being distributed in schools by the Ministry of Education, which never happened. Also, according to Bolsonaro, this book was part of a *Seminário LGBT Infantil* (Children's LGBT Seminar), but this event

School Without Party movement), who became better known nationally, participating in numerous TV shows to discuss the subject. However, after strong pressure from religious groups, including evangelical deputies and senators, the project ended up being closed, without the distribution of the material produced.

In an interview to the Newspaper Hora Extra in 2018, Miguel Nagib indicates that the movement seeks to combat the existing confusion between freedom to teach and freedom of speech since, according to him, teachers would have the right to the first, but not the second. At that moment, Nagib indicated support for the candidate Jair Bolsonaro, indicating that the then-candidate would possibly include "the fight against the ideological, political and partisan use of schools and universities in his government program". He also indicated as one of the main objectives of this movement the posting of a poster in all classrooms of the elementary and high school containing the obligations of the teacher.

The School Without Party project has received special support from the evangelical group, mainly considering the articulation around the fight against the so-called "gender ideology." For School Without Party, the debate around gender and sexuality issues, understanding gender as a social construction, would also be interpreted as indoctrination by teachers. Miskolci and Campana (2017) interpret this movement as a moral panic, which also represents a shift in the political agenda of conservative groups in Latin America.

This issue becomes especially sensitive in the educational field. As Balieiro (2018) rightly points out, even during the government of Dilma Rousseff, there was an intense debate on the issue of "gender ideology" in the educational field, implying the exclusion of any mention of the gender category in the final version of the *Plano Nacional de Educação - PNE* (National Education Plan) approved in 2014, highlighting the role of the School without Party movement, already at this moment, as a central moral entrepreneur in this process. According to Borges and Borges (2018), religious/conservative groups effectively used the mass media, indicating that the moral endeavor started was aimed at safeguarding the "traditional Brazilian family."

Conservative leaders, such as federal deputy and evangelical pastor Marcos Feliciano, who became chairman of the national congress human rights commission in 2013, still under Dilma Rousseff's administration, began to openly support the School Without Party movement. After the 2014 presidential elections, with a growing visibility of conservative movements in Brazil, the School Without Party movement went through a process of expansion, more and more right-wing politicians incorporated the proposal of the School Without Party in their electoral campaigns.

Under the government of Michel Temer, the issue of "gender ideology" returned to the center of the educational debate during the discussion of the final version of the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular - BNCC* (Brazilian Learning Standards), published in 2018. There was also no mention of the gender category in the approved version of this document, which tends to demonstrate an objective success in the action of these moral agents, among which the School without Party movement would be one of the main ones (Oliveira, 2021). For Macedo (2017), conservative demands displaced political negotiations in the preparation of the BNCC.

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never happened. Instead, what had been held in 2012 was the ninth edition of the annual event *Seminário LGBT no Congresso Nacional* (LGBT Seminar at the National Congress), whose theme that year was *Infância e Sexualidade* (Childhood and Sexuality).

These political victories of the School Without Party movement in the scope of educational policies contrast with the defeats faced mainly in the judiciary's scope, which has reaffirmed the unconstitutionality of the bills inspired by this movement, and which are eventually approved. In Alagoas State, the legislative assembly had approved Law No. 7.800/2016 that instituted the *Programa Escola Livre* (Free School Program). The approved law followed the model of a project available on the website of the School Without Party movement, indicating that teachers could be penalized if they failed to comply. In December 2016, the *Ministério Público Federal* (Public Prosecutor's Office) defended the unconstitutionality of this law since it would affect the constitutional principles of democratic education and the pluralism of ideas and pedagogical concepts, and the students' freedom of conscience. In March 2017, the STF granted an injunction in the Direct Action of Unconstitutionality Nº 5.537 to suspend the integrality of this law, and the action was filed by the National Confederation of Workers in Educational Establishment. More recently, the STF unanimously declared that similar legislation was unconstitutional, approved by the City Council of Nova Gama, Goiás State.

Despite these legal setbacks, according to a survey by the *Frente Nacional Escola sem Mordaça* (National Front School without Gag), there are currently several law projects inspired by the School Without Party spread by city councils and legislative assemblies throughout Brazil, of which: 41 are in force, nine have been approved, four have been sanctioned, 53 in progress, and some cases there are projects that have the support of left-wing parties such as the PT and the *Partido Comunista do Brasil* – PC do B (Communist Party of Brazil).

## 5. Complaints against teachers carried by School Without Party

The School Without Party website offers a link to denounces ideological indoctrination in schools and universities. The whistleblower's anonymity is guaranteed in the link, requiring information such as the name of the institution, level of education, whether it is public or private, a summary of the complaint, as well as files with images and/or sound that prove the complaint. They have in their blog (<http://www.escolasempartido.org/blog>) 30 posts that includes denunciations against "ideological education" and also some news about the movement and the legal status of their proposal.

On the blog, both "articles" and "testimonials" are available for consultation, although, among the articles, there are also testimonials, mainly from students. Some articles propose to be more analytical, starting from a critique of a range of guidelines such as the Paulo Freire method, the freedom of speech of teachers in the classroom, etc. In general, the testimonies and articles that have a tone of denunciation are focused on teachers' performance in the field of human and social sciences, and mainly in basic education, with denunciations referring to higher education being less frequent.

The two main topics that stand out are the debates involving gender and sexuality and criticisms of the capitalist system. As this is qualitative research, I chose the more specific cases focused in these two themes, especially those cases in which teachers of social sciences are accused to be indoctrinators. This is just a part of the accusations against the teacher available in

their blog but is also relevant to say that this movement is articulate with other institutions, and quite often they press charges in different spaces at the same time.

It is also interesting to select some case from their blog once that the articles "articles" and the "testimonials" are not only a charge, but a reflection about the situation, that can reveal the worldview that is present in this movement. Of course, this we cannot affirm that every person that supports the School Without Party has the same worldview, but the cases published in their blog highlights what can be considered more relevant and has the capacity of mobilization on the internet.

One of the articles, entitled *Os buracos negros de uma roda de conversa* (The black holes of a talking circle), signed by Roberta Simão, deals with a complaint against an activity developed by a pedagogue at a municipal school in the Minas Gerais State, which would be a talking circle for sixth and 7th-grade students on "Plurality." According to the author, she intends to examine the performance of "militants disguised as teachers." Still, according to her:

We note that the title already has an ideological connotation, the word "plurality." Society is, in fact, plural; the problem is not there; the problem is in the primer behind this word. There was an appropriation of words by political groups committed to imposing their wishes on the population, thus creating an "ideological repertoire." Today, it is not possible to speak in plurality in the raw sense - unless it is accompanied by an explanation - because there is a distortion of its meaning. Just to mention that there is an agenda that conducts this word, it would be impossible to deal with a complex subject like this - without leaving any doubts in the air - with children aged 11 and 12. (Simão, 2020).

The conversation wheel methodology is also attacked, as students still would not have "critical capacity" to deal with this topic so that the activity would be a "monologue disguised as conversation." However, the main criticism falls on the content, focused on "respect for all forms of affection," which would touch on sexuality and take away from parents the right to instruct their children in terms of moral and religious orientation. In the author's perception, this activity would be a "project of mass initiation of child militants of an ideological cause."

In an article by Miguel Nagib entitled *O Vale Tudo da Doutrinação* (The Everything Goes of Indoctrination), the author analyzes an activity by a history professor at a State Technical School in São Paulo. According to the author:

Author translation At the State Technical School Lauro Gomes, in São Bernardo do Campo, there is a History teacher who uses his class time to criticize capitalism (in an unexplained way, but always showing the "disadvantages" of the system from a communist perspective), as he says: taking a "leap in quality." This "leap in quality" compares the subject studied with the current situation from his perspective. As in the example below, he makes completely absurd comparisons between the situation of slaves during the colonial period and that of workers today. (Nagib, 2020). Author translation

In the material presented, the history teacher makes comparisons between the working conditions of slaves in the colonial period and the process of precarious work in the contemporary world, raising questions such as "How much does a delivery boy earn in these pandemic times? How much do they have to work a day? What are the working conditions?". For Nagib, the teacher "wants to shove his positions down the students' throats." Still, according to Nagib, the professor

would call himself "Christian, communist and 'defender of democracy," which would indicate that he does not know what he is defending.

In both cases, we find a narrative in which the teaching knowledge is conceived not as specialized knowledge, derived from the academic and professional expertise of the teachers, but as a personal conviction, and that, as such, could not be present in the classroom. It is also interesting to realize that these accusations against the teacher have the goal to produce what Triviño (2017) called *miedo educativo* (educational fear), once that these kinds of action intend to control indirectly what the teachers cannot teach, articulating this with the families that should press the schools.

As Macedo (2017) demonstrates, education would be within the scope of moral values for the School Without Party movement, being the responsibility of parents and family; in contrast, teaching would be related to the knowledge and skills to be acquired the responsibility of the school. As can be seen, this division implies a stricter reading of education, at the same time that it produces a certain nebulosity to what should be included and what should be excluded from school content.

Issues involving the debate on gender and sexuality and the analysis and criticism of the capitalist system are relevant themes in the field of human and social sciences, on which there is an accumulation of theoretical debate and empirical research. The attack on the pedagogical autonomy of teachers in the post-truth era, to which Peters (2017) refers, occurs in very complex ways, as in this case, in which it is reaffirmed that the teacher has the autonomy to teach; however, he cannot go against students' family moral values. The complexity of the issue is found in the fact that family moral values are recurrently based on the naturalization of the social world, while the knowledge of the human and social sciences is produced from the denaturalization of this reality.

The argumentative line of School Without Party is based on a false match between knowledge accumulated in the field of human and social sciences and family moral values, interpreting the two as interpretations of reality that must be circumscribed to the private sphere. This type of argument that distances itself from scientific evidence, approaching the emotional appeal of some speech (as in Bolsonaro's speech in defense of the innocence of children in schools), is what characterizes the debate in the post-truth (McIntyre, 2018).

Then, we can observe a profound affinity between the discourse of School Without Party and Bolsonarism in Brazil, also because part of Bolsonaro's charisma originates in the Christian fight against gender ideology (Cesarino, 2019). Thus, reaffirming that the understanding of gender as a social construction would be just a personal opinion or, more than that, it would be an ideological content, and as such, it should not be part of school curricula. Still, within the narrative constructed by both Bolsonaro and the School Without Party, the introduction of this debate at the school level would reflect the action of the left parties that governed Brazil, emphasizing the PT's activities between 2003 and 2016.

As Tallis (2016) indicates, the producers of these speeches in the post-truth offer people meaningful and attractive interpretations of their present situations and their possibilities for the future, even if factually incorrect or without an empirical basis. The educational problems are announced as arising from the supposed ideological indoctrination that would occur in schools,

which would also reflect indoctrination in universities. Following this reasoning, School Without Party points out a way to overcome Brazilian educational problems by overcoming "ideological indoctrination," even though empirical evidence is not presented.

School Without Party in the context of post-truth seeks to delegitimize the accumulation of existing knowledge in certain areas of knowledge, classifying it as ideological, and using this justification as a resource to shape the school curriculum from a moral agenda. This first movement is achieved mainly through its action as a moral agent in the spaces for debate and the elaboration of educational policies. However, as the school curriculum is made up of official documents, including the practice of teachers, School Without Party has intensified its actions in the process of denouncing the pedagogical work of teachers and encouraging the enactment of laws that institutionalize this kind of practice.

Although the movement claims to have received little support from Bolsonaro since he became president, reports of a growing rigging in public schools by teachers linked to Bolsonarism and advocates of the School Without Party project (Fragão, 2020) tend to indicate that the election of Bolsonaro ended up giving greater visibility to the movement.

Even though the movement was created in 2004, the growth of its visibility in Brazil is based on the same socio-political context that projected Bolsonaro, marked by intense political polarization and by the rise of the post-truth era. Bolsonarism and School Without Party are projected in the same context. They are feed back into the clashes in the public sphere, mainly concerning the elaboration of a moral agenda that stands as one of the bases of the conservative wave in Brazil and which has reached teaching work directly when trying to impose new criteria for the delimitation of what should or should not be taught in the classroom of something, distancing itself from the discussions elaborated by the scientific community.

## **6. Final considerations**

The rise of right-wing populisms in and in the post-truth era is a global phenomenon, although it gains particular outlines in each country and region. In the Brazilian case, the election of Bolsonaro in 2018 took place in a context in which there was already a strong political polarization and an intense action of conservative movements in education, among which the School Without Party stands out. The intense action at different levels (municipal, state, and federal) demonstrates a strong capillarity of this movement, which in some contexts manages to bring together left parties around similar bills. Other movements have emerged with inspiration similar to School Without Party, such as *Docentes pela Liberdade* (Professors for Freedom), founded by biology professor Marcelo Hermes-Lima at the University of Brasilia in 2019; the group opposes what they call "left ideological hegemony," mainly in the humanities and social sciences (Alves, 2019).

Understanding the teaching work in Brazil leads us inevitably to an analysis of agents who try to implement a conservative agenda in the educational field, or, at least, to prevent the advance of more progressive agendas in this debate. As indicated, the denunciations that School Without Party makes are linked mainly to the teaching of content linked to gender and sexuality and criticisms of the capitalist system, what directly affect the teachers of social sciences. It is

impossible – from a critical perspective – teach social sciences avoiding controversial issues, and gender and sexuality are one of these issues.

The argumentative reasoning elaborated by this movement distances itself from the academic debate, approaching an appeal to moral and family values, understood as belonging to the private sphere and, therefore, should not be the object of reflection in the school environment. Thus, it is observed that such an argument gain meaning in the context of post-truth, where the appeal to emotions has greater relevance than the evidence. For teachers that teach about social life, the moral and family values always have been a challenge, because they contribute to the naturalization of the social really, and the social sciences appeared to denaturalize the social really, our social life.

It is important to mention that the sociopolitical changes that have taken place in Brazil in the recent period also include the contestation of traditional sources of authority, the mainstream media, public universities, social movements and political parties, and the search for new sources of authority, the neo-pentacostal media networks, whatsapp groups, robot algorithm strategies etc. The School Without Party movement places itself at the center of these new sources of authority, contesting that teachers can autonomously make their pedagogical choices due to their academic background, since for this movement there would be other sources of authority (such as the values of the "traditional family") which in many cases must overlap scientific and academic knowledge.

I understand that school knowledge is characterized, precisely, by the ability to present students with a type of knowledge that they would not have access to outside of school, which Young (2007) calls powerful knowledge. If gender relations and those of exploitation existing in the capitalist system are naturalized within the family, it would be up to the school to denaturalize these relations.

In this context, it is necessary to reaffirm the role of teachers, their expertise, and their autonomy in the classroom. It is a matter of rhetoric and recognizing some of the main foundations of the modern school and its socio-political sense of production and diffusion of knowledge. The legal setbacks that School Without Party has suffered reaffirm the relevance of the autonomy of teaching work and the relevance of the plurality of ideas in the school space, which is based on the debate developed in the academic and scientific field.

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