

## The educational policy of the new Brazilian Common National Curriculum Framework: an Analysis based on Biopolitics <sup>1 2 3 4</sup>

### *A política educacional da nova Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC): um olhar a partir da biopolítica*

### *La política educativa de la nueva Base Común Curricular Nacional (BCCN): un análisis desde la biopolítica*

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#### **Abstract**

This article discusses the educational policy of the new Brazilian National Curricular Common Base (NCCB-BNCC) in the epistemological context of biopolitics. It brings together international authors and works that contribute to elucidate elements of this context, such as the concepts of "life" and "death," "citizenship," and "bare life." The text presents the criticisms of some Brazilian educators on the subject, focusing primarily on Dermeval Saviani's diagnosis, one of the important references in the field of Brazilian educational policy. It concludes that such concepts can shed new light on the subject, demonstrating the fragility of this educational policy that, by being exclusively guided by biopolitical criteria, excludes a broader and civic education.

**Keywords:** educational policy, biopolitics, citizenship, bare life, death

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## **Resumo**

*O artigo procura efetuar o debate sobre o tema da política educacional da nova Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) no contexto epistemológico da biopolítica. Agrega autores e obras do cenário mundial que contribuem para elucidar elementos presentes neste contexto, como os conceitos de “vida” e “morte”, “cidadania” e “vida nua”. Apresenta as críticas de alguns educadores brasileiros ao tema, concentrando-se especialmente no diagnóstico de Dermeval Saviani, um dos referenciais importantes da área da política educacional brasileira. Conclui que tais conceitos podem lançar uma nova luz compreensiva sobre o assunto tratado, demonstrando assim a fragilidade de tal política educacional que, ao se pautar por critérios exclusivamente biopolíticos, exclui uma formação ampliada e cidadã.*

**Palavras-chave:** política educacional, biopolítica, cidadania, vida nua, morte

## **Resumen**

*El artículo busca efectuar el debate sobre el tema de la política educativa de la nueva Base Común Curricular Nacional (BCCN) en el contexto epistemológico de la biopolítica. Reúne autores y obras del escenario mundial que contribuyen a dilucidar elementos presentes en este contexto, como los conceptos de “vida” y “muerte”, “ciudadanía” y “vida desnuda”. Presenta las críticas de algunos educadores brasileños sobre el tema, centrándose especialmente en el diagnóstico de Dermeval Saviani, una de las referencias importantes en el campo de la política educativa brasileña. Concluye que tales conceptos pueden arrojar una nueva luz integral sobre el tema abordado, demostrando así la fragilidad de tal política educativa. Al guiarse por criterios exclusivamente biopolíticos, esta excluye una educación ampliada y ciudadana.*

**Palabras clave:** política educativa, biopolítica, ciudadanía, vida desnuda, muerte

## Introduction

This text aims to show the relationship of the new *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (BNCC- Common National Curriculum Framework) with the educational policy in contemporary biopolitics. It seeks to unveil which biopolitical mechanisms were used by biopower to establish itself as the controlling law of all K-12 education and even the curriculum of Teaching Undergraduate degrees due to the need for specific teacher education. Thus, this reflection seeks to rethink education in our current scenario, with its "intentions" and "ends," as Antônio Joaquin Severino states in the article "*A busca do sentido da formação: tarefa da filosofia da educação*" [The search for the meaning of human formation: a task for the philosophy of education] (2006).

According to Foucault (1999b), unlike the sovereign power "who made die and let live," the mark of contemporary biopolitics is the motto "to make life and to let die," which can increase wars and social and ecological catastrophes, as we are currently seeing. After all, as he says: "For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence" (p. 134). In this context, biopolitics conforms to the policy of body immunization, in which the best defense is the attack. Attitudes, such as cleanliness, hygiene, and asepsis, leave the scope of social medicine and invade the contexts of the world of life. Therefore, there is no recognition of others and their differences. There is an intolerance towards the different, considered a virus, a bacteria, a bacillus, an invader that should be exterminated.

However, on the other hand, affirmative biopolitics can also lead to an increase in life expectancy by adopting control techniques emerged from social medicine, in turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, such as hygiene and cleanliness, the prophylaxis of diseases, and the vaccination campaigns. Technologies of population behavior are developed as a form of controlling life, which can either improve humans' life quality or their animalization. Nazism and Fascism would be the most genuine by-products of a degenerated biopolitics, in which life in the concentration fields became bare. In the social Darwinism at play, the neoliberal system incorporated the techniques of the social government of negative biopolitics, or *thanatopolitics*, electing rivalry and competition as a rule to "make live and to let die." Under this influence, education elected evaluation as the supreme degree of the pedagogical process, which, in Saviani's (2016b) perspective, is a pedagogical distortion.

In this text, we defend that the aim of these curriculum reforms, whose strategic dispositive is translated into the new BNCC, is not only to make education a hostage of the market but also to align education to a broader strategy, with a biopolitical nature, which started to prevail in almost worldwide after World War II. As Amaral and Santos (2018) highlight, "the creation of school curricula should be preceded by a deep reflection on the relationship 'power/knowledge,' due to the need to problematize the practices and their inherent relations" (p. 4). However, this was not the case. Thus, we will seek to show that the lack of popular participation in the debate that originated the legislation and the choice of evaluation as the culminating point of this process was not a coincidence but the result of a mistaken pre-understanding of public policy, tied to the exercise of biopower.

Our proposal aims to go beyond the description of the education policy underway, showing "why" it is as it is or why it was guided in this way and not in another, and what are its meanings and ends. Biopolitics can help the educational policy field understand itself, towards a pedagogical enlightening of teachers and students and contributing to their professionalism. What does it mean to develop 'pedagogical enlightening' of such an educational policy through the eyes of biopolitics? What is the reach of this power strategy in the context in which we live?

To understand the regulatory milestone of a recent educational policy, such as BNCC, in this broad spectrum we first need to delineate the analysis of this policy from some concepts, mainly those pairs that are apparently antagonists but convergent in the biopolitical context: "life" and "death," "citizenship" and "bare life." To do so, we will be grounded on the works of Michel Foucault, Hanna Arendt, Roberto Esposito, Stephen J. Ball, and Giorgio Agamben. After, we make a digression or genealogy about its understanding in the current neoliberal panorama, based on Dermeval Saviani, Gaudêncio Frigotto, Diane Ravitch, Simone Barbieri, Rudá Ricci, among others. Finally, we seek to point out some impacts of this new education policy in the context of Brazilian public education.

## **Biopolitics in the survival of bodies**

In the article “*A pesquisa sobre política educacional no Brasil: análise de aspectos teórico-epistemológicos*” [The research on education policy in Brazil: an analysis of the theoretical-epistemological aspects] Jefferson Mainardes (2017) analyzed 140 articles in the area of educational policy published between 2010 and 2012. He unveils the incipient scenario: “The epistemological analysis of education policy productions is still a recent area of studies in Brazil” (p. 3), diagnosing that “there is no consensus, nor even a deeper debate about the importance of making explicit the epistemological perspective and position” (p. 17). According to this author, this theoretical frailness is constitutive of studies on Brazilian educational policy. He also warns that:

the lack of theory hinders the researcher's critical and creative thought. In some cases, the central problem is not the lack of theory, but the fragile articulation between the theory used as a fundament and the analyses implemented (low integration between theory and data). (Mainardes. 2017, p. 16)

Advocating that the area of educational policy should face some of these challenges for its consolidation, Mainardes (2017) mentions, in this sense, in order of importance:

The first challenge refers to the need to broaden the knowledge about the theoretical-epistemological fundamentals that researchers in the field of educational policy have used. There are at least three unfoldings for this question: the possible validity of making the epistemological options explicit in the research reports (publications), the importance of conscious and reflexive use of theories, and the possibilities and limits of pluralism as an epistemological perspective. (p. 17)

Attempting to contribute to the increment of educational policies' epistemological bases, the reflection is inspired by Roberto Esposito's idea in the book *Bíos, biopolítica y filosofía* [Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy] (2011), which affirms that after World War II we would expect the world would turn this obscure page of history and open a new era. However, biopolitics infiltrated into all sectors of social life, becoming an important part, if not determinant, in the social, political, scientific-cultural, and educational life. It is a project aiming to produce what Hannah Arendt (2016) calls “labour”, a life concerned only with maintaining the biological cycle of survival, stuck to the eternal return to daily body maintenance activities. In this direction,

Stephen J. Ball, in his book *Foucault, power, and Education* (2013), writes a chapter stating that one needs to rewrite the history of educational policy through biopolitical lenses. He does that in his book on the English education model. We should unveil some landmarks of the new BNCC on this horizon, seeking to demonstrate how biopolitics, with its control and standardization techniques, became effective as a long-range public policy in Brazil's education field.

We use Michel Foucault's testimony in the book *The History of Sexuality* (1999b), mainly chapter V, "Right of death and power over life," to explain our meaning and use of the concepts of "life and death" in the biopolitical context. After, we use Giorgio Agamben, in the book *Homo Sacer Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (2002), to interpret the pair of concepts of citizenship and bare life.

To Foucault (1999b), thinking politics in this perspective implies understanding the relationship between "history and life," that is, "the double position of life" situated at the same time "outside history, with its biological surrounding" and "within human historicity, infiltrated by its knowledge and power techniques" (p. 134). This situation did not happen overnight. In the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, biopolitics took the lead, first in social medicine and later in knowledge and action. Thus, life became an epistemological fundament of Biology – a significant displacement in the knowledge about human beings because they are transient in their historicity: "The new 19<sup>th</sup>-century episteme is characterized by time and historicity. Everything has an origin and a transience" (Cavalcante, 2021, p. 311). Biopolitics is structured from an inversion in the concepts of life and death, dear to the Greek tradition, which involves the power over life and death, or *Thanatos*. Until the modern era, sovereign power was exercised over the subjects' deaths. Gradually, with the advancement of new techniques of social medicine, disease prophylaxis, vaccines, hygiene, and health care, sovereign power converted itself into a biopower over individuals' lives, that is, over what Michel Foucault calls "body-species" or "mass," and Hardt and Negri (2018) call "crowd".

Though this distinction is not quite evident in Foucault's work, the regulatory power of populations – biopower – expresses itself in the statistics about disease, death, and birth. It considers the normality rates for each theme or object in question. Thus, biopower "brings into view a field comprised of more or less rationalized attempts to intervene upon the vital characteristics of human existence" (Rabinow & Rose, 2006, p. 28), contributing to its increment. While biopower acts in the most individual level of control and production of

disciplined bodies, biopolitics work in the body-species, producing regimes of authority, forms of knowledge, and more collective intervention practices.

In this diagram, one pole of biopower focuses on an anamopolitics of the human body, seeking to maximize its forces and integrate it into efficient systems. The second pole is regulatory control, the biopolitics of the population, focusing on the species body, the body imbued with the mechanisms of life: birth, morbidity, mortality, and longevity. (Rabinow & Rose, 2006, p. 28)

In his books *Society Must Be Defended* (1999a) and *The Birth Of Biopolitics* (2012), Foucault shows that this power is displaced for the whole society: leaving its social medicine niche to regulate schools, prisons, hospitals, mental hospitals, etc., transforming the social panorama into a new governmentality of life. It is a force from outside history, taking charge of its course, and is present in the neoliberal system of producing docile bodies.

Gradually, life (*bios*) became an object of government's calculations to the point that it is introduced in the political sphere, something that did not occur in the Greek tradition. To Aristotle, there was a clear distinction between the biological life, merely reproductive (*zoe*) and the qualified life (*bios*). It would be inconceivable that natural life could be part of political life (qualified life). However, what characterizes biopolitical modernity is the penetration of *zoe* into the *bios* sphere. Political concerns turn to simple living and transform themselves into governmentality techniques aiming to prolong the survival of the bodies or the production of docile bodies to advance capitalism. It is the animalization of life. It shapes modern thought, as it is an external power (biological) that conquers history, as Foucault (1999b) states.

An example of human beings' animalization is the metaphor of the "man-ox" taken from the text "O perfil do educador para o século XXI: de boi de coice a boi de cambão" (1999)[The educator's profile for the twentieth-first century: From object to subject of educational politics], by Rudá Ricci. He uses this metaphor to illustrate the workers' profile demanded by Frederick Taylor, creator of the scientific organization of work. Taylor advocated that the scientific selection demanded "man-ox" workers, that is, an individual with little critical spirit, able to handle the physical efforts, and adapted to the routines of industrial work, which could then join the emerging work market. Charles Chaplin criticized this model in the movie *Modern Times*.

"Bare life" is a concept inherited by Giorgio Agamben from Walter Benjamin's critical theory. In the essay "Toward the Critique of Violence" (2013), Benjamin refers to the conditions

of advanced capitalism as a "bare life," submissive to mythical violence, i.e., the predatory violence of the system and, therefore, subjugated to the State of exception that does not guarantee more rights. In the interpretation of Giorgio Agamben, Walter Benjamin's translator to Italian and commentator, the term became known as "bare life," that is, the power of life void of basic rights of fundamental citizenship, whose greatest experiment was held in the concentration camps during World War II, where prisoners just "survived." In advanced capitalism, life became restricted to the bareness of the planned functionality of neoliberal government. Agamben crossed Foucaultian discussions about biopolitics with the reflections about the concentration camps brought by Hannah Arendt, mainly in the book *The Human Condition* (2016). For him, the Western biopolitical paradigm is the rural area and not the city. This view directly affects the discourse about citizenship, a term derived from "urban" and "city," and guides most of our laws and decrees, even in the education field (Azevedo, 2019). Such understanding alters the traditional categories of politics, leading Agamben (2002) to state in his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) that the problem of *homo sacer* is that "the fundamental categorical pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, *zoē/bios*, exclusion/inclusion." (p. 16).

The *homo sacer*, an obscure figure of Roman law that could be immolated or sacrificed, as they did not have rights over their rights, was reused as a metaphor to express the situation of contemporary human beings facing the State of exception. The State of exception is a juridical form of power triggered by the State in the face of its sovereign and legal order. However, in modern democracy, it became the rule, allowing citizens' rights to be suspended at any moment.

*Homo sacer* and bare life point out the same phenomenon in biopolitical modernity: the (re)production of disqualified life, bare of the rights of science, culture, an aesthetical and ethical worldview, submissive to the precepts of a purely instrumental and commercial reason. We will find some of these elements acting in the laws, decrees, and other regulations of Brazilian education policy lately, as we seek to show especially in the BNCC agenda.

## The new BNCC and the abdication of popular participation

Educational policy is present in the legislative context due to the micro and macro relationships of social processes. As education is not a world apart from society but has a constitutive relation with it, it is impossible to discuss educational policies without a broader contextualization, i.e., with no correlation with the macrostructural context of the process.

Education is characterized as a radically inclusive practice. Thus, it is not in its nature to stimulate competition, a rule of the capitalist market, because, if it were, it would lose one of its more important meanings and ends: socialization. However, in the current biopolitical scenario, the institutions are increasingly led to adapt themselves to competitive demands. After all, according to the 'social Darwinism' at stake, only the more adapted will survive; thus, only those who will better develop their competencies and abilities. In this sense, the main instrument to "measure" these parameters is the evaluation of competencies and abilities. Therefore, we have been considering the biopolitics diagnosis, the prevalence of the norm empire, or the normalization dispositives originating in biopolitics, which grants a regulating importance to the evaluation system at all educational levels. This scenario explains the enormous expansion of the evaluation system, mainly at undergraduate and graduate levels and, more recently, in K-12 education. Therefore, within a biopolitics theoretical reference, we can perceive the emergence of large-scale evaluation as a distinctive vector between "qualified life" (*bios*) and the "bare life" (*zōē*) in Brazilian legislation. Besides this, the participation of those interested in the process – teachers, students, researchers, and other stakeholders– became secondary as biopolitics implies the overvaluation of an external power. Hence, though these subjects are interconnected, we will deal later with the lack of democracy and popular participation in the process of building the new BNCC and the use of large-scale evaluation, not as a way to diagnose the quality of K-12 education but as a discriminatory vector for schools' survival.

After the end of the military dictatorship, Brazil started a re-democratization process marked by several reformulations in several sectors. In the first government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2000), a reform of the Brazilian State started through several dispositives to conform Brazilian life to the international agenda. One of them was the creation of *Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Básica* (SAEB- National Basic Education Assessment System) and, on the following year, the *Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio* (ENEM- National High School Exam), seeking to establish the measuring parameters of K-12 quality. Besides this, State

bodies connected to Education, for instance, the Ministry of Education (MEC) and the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira* (INEP- National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira), became powerful instrument of education evaluation. The following governments (Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff) sought to speed up the investments in education and increase popular participation. However, with the coup against Dilma's government, Michel Temer resumed the previous agenda, suffocating popular participation in the educational processes and transforming education into an evaluation system connected with the market.

This anomaly compromises the meaning of the school's democratic management, hijacking its didactic-pedagogical autonomy. Though the school is free to develop its political-pedagogical project, the evaluation system imprisons it. There have been discontinuities in advancing liberal rationality among the different educational policies adopted lately; however, the biopolitical project advances through the rulers' hands at different paces.

In this sense, we can understand the BNCC origin by returning to the *Constituição Federal de 1988* [1988 Federal Constitution], which establishes in Article 210: “Minimum curricula shall be established for elementary schools in order to ensure a common basic education and respect for national and regional cultural and artistic values.”. The *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* [Law of Directives and Bases of National Education] – LDB 1996 – Art. 26 foresaw the creation of a common national base, though increased its reach by saying that BNCC would go beyond the minimum curricula. Besides the study of Portuguese and Mathematics, it should encompass the physical and natural world, arts, physical education, modern foreign languages, music, environmental education, transversal themes related to human rights, prevention against all forms of violence against children and teenagers, and the study of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture.

However, Saviani (2016b) asks himself why, though present in the previous legislation, there is the need to establish a law that regulates the curriculum in its construction between a common core and a diversified part. The author points out that the BNCC reinforces the need for a common core of subjects (Portuguese and Mathematics) that work as a parameter for international evaluations. In the meantime, other subjects more concerned with civic formation, such as philosophy or sociology, are left behind or have their study loads reduced. Hence, there

is a tendency to make education more precarious by suspending civic formation so that students will only survive in a changing job market.

According to Barbieri (2021), the BNCC had not been implemented yet for several reasons, including the lack of an articulated National Education System that could unify the initiatives of the Federation, states, and cities. The diversity of Brazilian schools' realities hindered the standardized implementation of pedagogical practices. On the one hand, there was the concern that a more systematic organization in this direction would colonize regional cultural traces and their singularities from a hegemonic perspective. On the other hand, establishing a better articulated national policy with school unities without hampering teachers' autonomy would be justified by the national and international indicators, which show many frailties of Brazilian education, especially in high school. Thus, a national policy would better articulate actors and schools and improve the Brazilian results and education processes.

In several articles, the LDB 9394/96 (2010) highlights that a minimum curriculum should consider regional characteristics and the singularities of the school system. However, the Common Framework soon moved away from local and regional knowledge, which it should legitimate. Thus, what is the meaning and the objective of BNCC – against those who defend progressive pedagogical theories – structuring the whole K-12 educational system based on its role to produce results and not to value processes? We can ask this question not simply to point out the ills of educational policies, but to advance their understanding, meanings, and ends.

The results are not a coincidence but a consequence of how BNCC was built. In June 2015, at the beginning of Dilma's second mandate, through Ordinance n° 592, a Commission of Specialists was established to create the BNCC proposal, to build the preliminary proposal and, later, its public consultation. A committee of specialist advisors was created, composed of professors with teaching experience, teachers, and K-12 researchers. Representatives from education secretaries and councils were also present so that, at another moment, there could be a public consultation made available by the *Secretaria da Educação Básica do Ministério da Educação* (SEB/MEC- K-12 Secretary of the Ministry of Education), aiming to incorporate the contributions of several subjects involved in Brazilian educational processes. According to MEC, this version, organized by specialists and that consulted civil society, received more than 12 million contributions in 2015.

In the meantime, corporations articulated the movement *BNCC pela Base* [BNCC by the base], composed of entities and companies such as Leman, Gerdau Foundations, and Roberto Marinho Foundations, *Itaú Social*, and *Instituto Ayrton Sena*, supported by movements as *Todos pela Educação*, aiming to influence the discussion through a market bias.<sup>5</sup> What are the businesses' interests in this discussion? In what sense do they want to guide their influences? Indeed, businesses have long been trying to influence the pathways of Brazilian education, going back to the creation of the *Plano Nacional de Educação* (PNE- National Education Plan) (Lei Federal 13.005, 2014), approved in 2014, at the end of Dilma's first government. They are interested in evaluating educational quality through results, thus controlling teachers' work and decreasing the costs with a compressed formation. In turn, market packages are offered to train teachers quickly. All this is against the historical reivindication that seeks to offer dignity for teachers, adequate salary conditions, career plans, and a remuneration policy, which means disregarding the teaching contexts and proves the biopolitical thesis as an external power that confiscates history (Foucault, 1999b).

The second version was published in May 2016, a result of discussions gathering the *Conselho Nacional de Secretários da Educação* (CONSED - National Council of Education Secretaries), the *União Nacional dos Dirigentes Municipais da Educação* (UNDIME- National Union of Municipal Education Managers), and 9 thousand managers-teachers and specialists. According to MEC, this version was sent to the schools to raise their opinions and discussed through a public consultation to organize the final document. However, in April 2017, MEC handed the first BNCC version to be reviewed by the *Conselho Nacional de Educação* and held five public audiences in several Brazilian regions. Though the official documents say there were three versions of the framework, only the last two are in the public domain. Some specialists claim that the first version is the best, but we find only testimonies or indirect records in the framework's portal. In synch with Barbieri's (2021) analysis, we can say that teachers' voices were gradually silenced while the businesses' ones stood out. We witnessed the submission of different educational systems to a national education plan in BNCC, uniformly assembling processes and results in Brazilian education, establishing essential learnings, competencies, and abilities that should, as a rule, be part of teaching.

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<sup>5</sup> About this, see the Master's dissertation *A atuação do movimento 'Todos pela Educação' na educação básica brasileira: do empresariamento ao controle ideológico* (2018), by Karen de Fátima Ségala.

BNCC emerged in the context of education workers' struggle, seeking to plan a school curriculum to create an articulated national education system. However, several events blocked this process. Thus, when building LDB 9394/96, there was an apparent public discussion. However, when the process finished, the prevailing text did not correspond to educators' expectations, as the document's final creation disregarded their participation.

In this work about the creation history of the new BNCC, we observe the gradual withdrawal of popular opinion. There was no need to listen to the stakeholders, as truth was pre-established by a power that took over history. BNCC is not an educational reform but a biopolitical dispositive that guides the evaluation process, the reform of several surrounding measures, and legal marks. Therefore, biopolitics can help education better understand its history, not disregard the importance of biological concepts and their influence in its unfolding, and understand the control techniques used by biopower. These techniques deny dialogue, the basis for mutual learning, as they understand the other as an adversary or enemy that needs to be suppressed, never as a companion in the pathway towards building something new. Next, we will analyze how the evaluation mechanisms, overvalued in the new BNCC and embedded by its knowledge and power techniques, act in Brazilian education and ground the consequent hierarchy and distribution of power and resources.

## **The impacts of the new BNCC on the survival of K-12 education**

Lately, the Brazilian panorama in the education field has strongly aligned the education systems, mainly in basic schools, with the evaluation mechanisms of the international system. Until then, there was a path toward a single and democratic high school for all young people. However, when the Law nº 13.415/2017 of the High School Reform substituted the Provisional Measure 746/2016, there was a fragmentation between technical and civic formation. According to Savini (2018b), this caused a "setback typical of the 1940s" to Brazilian education. For Gaudêncio Frigotto (2022), the "new high school is a betrayal of young people and future generations" due to its "fragmented arrangements," a "bag of nothing." After all, 85% of K-12 students attending the public education system in the country will be submitted to the formative pathways, which will not be fully offered, as most schools do not have the resources for such. Thus, they will migrate to the job market after high school. The 15% of students from private

schools will undoubtedly continue with all the subjects, thus deepening social inequality in the country, considering they will have the general formation needed to enter the university.

Though we cannot confuse it with BNCC, which encompasses Childhood Education, Elementary, Middle, and High school,

the new movement after the homologation in December 2017 was the publication of BNCC for High School in 2019, established by the Resolution n. 4, from December 17th, 2018, which follows the same directives of BNCC for childhood, elementary, and middle school. (Barbieri, 2021, p. 172)

Saviani (2016b) questions the results of Brazilian educational legislation, especially BNCC, approved during Michel Temer's government, as it seeks to improve the evaluation process, which is a pedagogical distortion. This argument is presented in his text entitled *Educação escolar, currículo e sociedade: o problema da Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (2016b) [School education, curriculum, and society: the problem of the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular*], mainly when he says:

Considering the centrality assumed by the issue of evaluation measured by standardized global tests in the national organization of education and taking into account the mention of other countries, mainly the United States, as a reference for this initiative of creating a "common national curriculum framework" in Brazil, everything indicates that the role of this new regulation is to adjust the work of Brazilian education to the parameters of standardized general evaluations. This circumstance evidences the limitations of this attempt because, as we have already warned, this subordination of the whole organization and work in national education to the concept of evaluation mentioned before implies a great distortion from the pedagogical point of view (Saviani, 2012, pp. 316-317), an understanding reinforced by the broad and robust criticism carried out by Diane Ravitch (2011) about the North American system, which is taken as a model for Brazil. (p. 75)

Through this logical and theoretical construction, Saviani (2016b) mentions Diane Ravitch's experience in the book *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. He uses the U.S's failed experience with K-12 large-scale evaluation as an example against the same endeavor in Brazil.

Ravitch worked in the education area and with the U.S. government, helping implement a large-scale evaluation system. However, she gradually perceived the mistakes of this system,

such as schools and principals masking their indexes to survive. Schools end up leaving behind activities focused on a more conscious or humanistic formation to adapt themselves to the performance demanded by the system. In this sense, Stephen Ball (2005) states that “the combination of managerial and performative reforms deeply reaches the education practice and the teacher’s soul – the ‘life in the classroom’ and teacher’s imagination world” (p. 548).

To prove his argument, Saviani (2016b) uses the fact that the 1988 Constitution and the LDB 9394/96, to which we might also add the *Diretrizes Nacionais Gerais da Educação Básica* (2010) and the *Plano Nacional de Educação* (Lei Federal 13.005, 2014), mentions that the school curriculum could be composed by a common core and a diversified part. However, the reasoning behind defining which subjects should belong to one or another segment lies in international evaluations. As a result, from the 11 compulsory high school subjects, only two continue: Portuguese and Mathematics. The other subjects become peripheral in the curriculum, generally associated with the so-called “formative pathways.” This scenario demands a series of changes and adjustments for the educational context, including university education, invading its autonomy guaranteed by the 1988 Constitution. Such a situation forces the review of *Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Básica*, DCN/EB – 2013 [National Curriculum Directives for Basic Education], which had an alternative political position from a more inclusive ideological bias, which ends up happening with the publication of Resolution n.º 1, from July 2nd, 2019: it alters Art. 22 of the Resolution CNE/CP n.º 2, from July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, which defines the *Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais* for pre-service training in higher education – Teaching Undergraduate degrees, pedagogical formation for graduates, and Second Teaching Undergraduate degree – and for continuous training. Finally, this refers to the close connection among curriculum, large-scale evaluation, and teacher training.

In this project, education is displaced: it is void of commitment to what is common to all, leaving the field free for privatization. The shrinking of education's social role reduces its presence in the public sphere, the appropriate place for collective, collaborative, and solidary activities, and contributes to the reproductive cycle of bare life. In this sense, civic formation, similar to what has happened in the concentration fields, is void of all broader public sense. The most common form of biopolitics is exclusion through inclusion, as the duo exclusion-inclusion is inseparable in this perspective. While the system normalizes and disciplines, it also excludes. An example is the Law n.º 10.639, from January 9th, 2003, which includes the obligation of the theme “Afro-Brazilian History and Culture” in the official curriculum. This pioneering law

produced meaningful advancements in affirmative policies, recognizing the contribution of Black and African-descendant people in Brazilian history. However, the regulation created a knowledge power when suggesting this should occur in the arts, literature, and history classes. At the same time, it limits or circumscribes this implementation to a place that releases other subjects from following this commitment. This experience illustrates the same process – "more of the same" – that occurred with BNCC's obsession with establishing competencies, lists of objectives, and specific contents considered essential to several knowledge areas, which aligns with the demands of large-scale evaluation. This situation certainly hinders the richness of contents in each area of knowledge, the inventiveness of methods, and teachers' choices, contrary to the 1988 Constitution, LDB 1996, and, mainly, the *Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Básica* (DCN/EB) (2013), which establish the rights and conditions for a school education, and point out the need for a more contextualized education.

The overvaluing of evaluation, one of BNCC's pedagogical fundamentals, contributes to a biopower able to infiltrate the precepts of biopolitics into education. BNCC mentions international evaluations, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which coordinates the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which established the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE). This alignment fits what neoliberalism preaches in this development phase, whose social intelligibility principle becomes the performance indicator metric. Reaching this objective also implies using decentralization strategies of educational policies and school accountability, and, consequently, of the teacher as the shaper of "bare life." Obviously, in this scenario, teachers' work is managed, measured, and calculated by indexes and results – thus the emphasis on competencies and abilities; after all, this is what is required by this curriculum reform:

The tighter or looser connections of the curriculum reform with pragmatic questions, such as the suitability to economic and market demands, students' performance improvement in large-scale evaluation, or the restriction of higher education access through professionalization, amongst others, characterizes disputes for hegemony around a formative and society project, disputes that cross the State and its decision-making instances in the legislative and executive branches, as well as their interlocutors. (Ferreti & Silva, 2017, p. 396)

As the government has education as a provisory action and not as a State policy, it is not concerned with civil education but only with a technical-professional formation. Thus, it promotes the education of the *homo saver*, or the “man-ox” – a sacrificial being that will not complain if his civil rights are violated. From this viewpoint, culture becomes semi-culture, games, and plays, falling into a racist folklorization. Science is understood as pseudoscience, a mere narrative or opinion; education becomes a marketing piece, a sub-product of companies’ philanthropy, while politics is reduced to the maintenance of powers that discipline bare life to labor tasks. However, as Amaral and Santos (2018) highlight: “In fact, understanding the curriculum beyond its instrumental dimension allows us to think of Education as a political arena, a stage of identity formation and conflicts, in which culture configures itself into power relations” (p. 6).

The biopower of bodies works as a powerful reading key to help unveil the contradiction of recent Brazilian educational legislation, such as BNCC, as it was created in the context of strong neoliberalism, in which evaluation is elected as the high point of the process. If the evaluation is, in the neoliberal perspective, the engine that measures competition, within a social Darwinism perspective, the institution of school, the course, or the teacher that does not fill the system's criteria will have their performance compromised. As a result, evaluation determines life and death, including the education system, as warned in the title of the famous book by Diane Ravitch (2011), mentioned by Saviani (2016b), *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*. The BNCC was created in this same spirit. As mentioned, several previous documents, such as Law 5692/71 and LDB 9394/96, had already foreseen a common core and a diversified part in the curriculum – this later depending on the choices of their “formative itineraries” – denying the intersubjective and collective dimension of identity construction.

The State stops fulfilling its roles or obligations of promoting civic education and starts to operate into a privatizing bias, in which social interests do not guide decisions, feeding the perverse circuit of bare life. Saviani (2016b) relies on the formation of a National Education System that seeks to break away from the continuation of this vicious cycle. However, given the fragmentation of existing policies and the precariousness of public education policies in Brazil, this dream continues to be a chimera.

## Conclusion

Supported by important references in biopolitics worldwide, in this article we first sought to present a perspective to discuss the new BNCC. Later we briefly discussed the new BNCC from the educational policy framework after the military dictatorship (1964-1985) until now, seeking to show how the relationship between history and life, with its biological surroundings, helps to distance people from the debate and towards considering evaluation as a discriminating mechanism of competencies and abilities within the educational systems. We undertook this analysis by tensioning the biopolitical concepts of "life and death" and "citizenship and bare life" to understand the impacts of the new BNCC in school life, mainly the lack of democracy in decision-making during its creation process and the overvaluing of large-scale evaluation. We conclude that the new BNCC comes in the wake of other education legislation approved in recent years in Brazil, emphasizing a more extensive project underway that disqualifies life with biological assumptions for most children and young people.

Hence, BNCC was approved in a hurry, with barely any consultation. Therefore, democracy and teachers' voices were silenced (Barbieri, 2021). Such a hurry turned the text into a target of criticisms and revocation demands for several reasons. One of them was that BNCC did not hold a broader discussion about how to implement such a process in a plural and diverse country with significant regional disparities. There is no background discussion about it, but there is a concern about efficiency. Therefore, despite its contextualization, there is a strong emphasis on competencies and abilities. It is like the old jargon that says, "do more with less," with a total lack of definition about criteria and targets.

If there had been an interest in building an articulated and efficient national system of education in this period, as promised by BNCC, the proposal to freeze investments in social policies for 20 years would not have been approved. The Constitutional Amendment 95, from December 2016, set a spending cap for education investments for 20 years. It makes it impossible to achieve the goals set by the National Education Plan (*Lei Federal 13.005*, 2014) and empties inclusive policies, such as *Fundo de Financiamento Estudantil* (FIES- Student Funding), the program *Universidade para Todos* (ProUni- University to All), and the expansion of federal universities, contributing to the imposition of a privatizing bias. After all, in biopolitical governmentality, people are not understood as social citizens or subjects of rights but as entrepreneurs of the self. Therefore, the point is to form people concerned with the

reproduction of life (bare), i.e., a life restricted to the biological cycle of body survival— or, as Araújo (2018) points out, the formation of “productive personalities” (p. 202).

Schools and universities are privileged mechanisms for the infiltration of biopower in society, as they own their guidance to the educational policies emanating from the State, which can have an authoritarian bias. Because of this, they can be seen as local, with a pedagogical power and a creator of active self-awareness, willing to resist in favor of an education that offers technical and professional formation connected to civic formation. We know that any evaluation can be formative, as it can benefit the teaching and learning procedures and improve and qualify people who become protagonists of their self-knowledge process. If not like this, there is no point in evaluating to record and classify people. People and their production cannot be reduced to indexes or quantitative data, much less to a simple result or metric. Thus, evaluating is a continuous process, a constant movement to correct paths and build new knowledge about oneself and one's surroundings. We know no metric can account for the production quality, but we need to consider criteria for academic improvement.

Therefore, the criticism should penetrate the process of subjectivation and action of biopolitical micro powers in the history of education, creating self-awareness, as an attempt to not be governed in the same fashion. Maybe this will help us to rethink the biopolitical dimension of language, the reason for the circulation of animal metaphors with a biopolitical background, as the metaphor of man-ox to show the work carried out in the job market, as well as by teachers, still stuck to the Taylorism work division. Rudá Ricci (1999), inspired by João Cabral de Melo Neto's work, makes an analogy with the teacher's work: a kicking ox is responsible for carrying the cart weight when going downhill, while the pulling ox pulls the cart and opens the way, with no special glamour. Not coincidentally, the editorial of the journal *Caderno Brasileiro de Ensino de Física* – the UFSC journal - volume 35, n. 2, August 2018 – is entitled: “*A BNCC e a Resolução CNE/CP nº 2/2015 para a formação docente: a ‘carroça na frente dos bois’*” [BNCC and the Resolution *CNE/CP nº 2/2015* for teacher training: the ‘cart in front of the oxen’ (Selles, 2018).

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