

Between liberating education and neoliberal educational practices: possibilities based on the Life Project



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Abstract

This article looks at the term Life Project in the National Common Core Curriculum from the perspective of the advance of neoliberal practices in Brazilian education. In this sense, through a concept of liberating education, it seeks to analyze how the Life Project can be subversive to the system, within its theoretical limits. The research uses bibliographic and documentary analysis, focusing on the National Common Curriculum Base and Law No. 13,415/2017, and also aims to understand this *corpus* in their respective socio-political contexts, with the Life Project as its main object of study. Finally, this analysis uses the concepts of neoliberalism and neoliberal practices by Dardot and Laval (2016) and liberating education by Freire (1996) as the main analytical bases. Throughout the study, we also try to glimpse ways of building Life Project classes as a way of confronting the construction of a neoliberal reality

Keywords

education; neoliberal practices; Life Project; Common National Curriculum Base.

Entre uma educação libertadora e práticas neoliberais educativas: possibilidades a partir do Projeto de Vida

Resumo

O presente artigo aborda o termo Projeto de Vida presente na Base Nacional Comum Curricular sob a perspectiva do avanço das práticas neoliberais na educação brasileira. Nesse sentido, por meio de uma concepção de educação libertadora, busca-se analisar o modo como o Projeto de Vida pode ser subversivo ao sistema, dentro de seus limites teóricos. A pesquisa utiliza análise bibliográfica e documental, centrando-se na Base Nacional Comum Curricular e na Lei nº 13.415/2017, ainda visa a compreender esse *corpus* em seus respectivos contextos sociopolíticos, tendo o Projeto de Vida seu principal objeto de estudo. Por fim, esta análise utiliza os conceitos de neoliberalismo e práticas neoliberais de Dardot e Laval (2016) e de educação libertadora de Freire (1996) como as principais bases analíticas. Procura-se ainda, ao longo do estudo, vislumbrar caminhos para a construção das aulas de Projeto de Vida como forma de enfrentamento da construção de uma realidade neoliberal.

Palavras-chave

educação; práticas neoliberais; Projeto de Vida; Base Nacional Comum Curricular.



Entre una educación liberadora y prácticas educativas neoliberales: posibilidades desde el Proyecto de Vida

Resumen

Este artículo aborda el término Proyecto de Vida presente en la Base Curricular Nacional Común desde la perspectiva del avance de las prácticas neoliberales en la educación brasileña. En este sentido, a través de una concepción de educación liberadora, se buscó analizar el modo en que el Proyecto De vida puede ser subversivo al sistema, dentro de sus límites teóricos. La investigación utiliza el análisis bibliográfico y documental, con foco en la Base Curricular Nacional Común y la Ley nº 13.415/2017. Además, se pretende comprender este corpus en sus respectivos contextos sociopolíticos, teniendo el Proyecto de Vida como su principal objeto de estudio. Finalmente, este análisis utiliza los conceptos de neoliberalismo y prácticas neoliberales de Dardot y Laval (2016) y de educación liberadora de Freire (1996) como principales bases analíticas. A lo largo del estudio, también se buscó vislumbrar formas de construir clases de Proyecto de Vida como una forma de enfrentar la construcción de una realidad neoliberal.

Palabras clave

educación; prácticas neoliberales; Proyecto de Vida; Base Curricular Nacional Común..

1 Introduction

Capitalism is shaped by the need to restrict and modulate any expectation of reality that is not based on the notion of monetization. As Albino, Rodrigues and Dutra- Pereira (2024) point out, within a scenario characterized by neoliberal practices, educational policies are strongly influenced by a neoliberal logic, which prioritizes "technicalized" and adaptive teaching over critical and inclusive education. Looking at normative documents such as the Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC), it becomes crucial to examine the Life Project curriculum component, paying attention to its limitations and potential.

This concept in the BNCC reflects an intersection between the social and economic demands of the neoliberal context and the possibility of proposing alternative paths in the educational field. With this in mind, the problem of this article is to understand the obstacles and potential opportunities of using the Life Project for an emancipatory education in a context marked by the deepening of neoliberal practices. Its main objective is to analyze how the concept of the Life Project is incorporated into the BNCC and to examine its potential alternatives in the educational context, based on theoretical approaches grounded in Paulo Freire's pedagogy. The aim is thus to question the established guidelines and raise possibilities for promoting a critical and transformative education.

2 Methodology

The methodology proposed here adopts a qualitative approach, centered on the analysis of bibliographic and documentary sources. In this context, the BNCC (2017) and Law No. 13,415/2017 stand out as primary sources for understanding the limitations and potential of an emancipatory education in the context of using the Life Project, whether as a component or as an objective or even as a class skill. To gain a deeper understanding of the concept of liberating education, Freire's works are considered, including *Pedagogy of autonomy: knowledge necessary for educational practice* (1996) and *Education as the practice of freedom* (2020). In addition, for the analysis of contemporary educational policies, especially the concepts of neoliberalism and neoliberal practices influencing a new educational logic, contributions by Dardot and Laval from *The New Reason for the World: An Essay on Neoliberal Society* (2016) are incorporated.

Thus, the analytical essay begins with a theoretical-conceptual diagnosis of neoliberalism and neoliberal practices in the Brazilian educational reality. The idea is to understand the advance of neoliberal practices in the Brazilian reality and their political and normative reflexes in the national educational field. Secondly, the Life Project is presented, which in the BNCC (2017) is described as one of the elements that make up the structure of one of the General Competences (General Competence 6), as well as one of the structuring axes of the New High School, and then this structuring axis analyzed. Next, some possibilities for an emancipatory education are suggested, albeit in a context of adversity, based on working with the Life Project.

3 Neoliberal practices in the Brazilian educational reality: perceptible implications in a scenario of disputes

Among the concepts in the BNCC (2017) is the importance of developing a life project as one of the structuring axes of the New High School, in addition to being linked to study and work, in order to transform the school into an environment "that welcomes young people", with it being committed to "comprehensive education". In this way, it aims to provide students with a general education that is essential for exercising citizenship and entering the world of work.

As much as the document emphasizes the importance of reflecting on young people and their contexts, it fails to question the social reality itself, characterized by widespread precariousness, by accepting as incontestable the discourse of economic efficiency that today justifies the deregulation of social protection laws. Under this "proto-discourse", state institutions come to align themselves with a supposed "market freedom", subordinating the role of the state to maintaining the process of valorization of value, since public intervention ends up serving to guarantee private profits.

It is in this sense that we articulate our understanding of neoliberalism and how it articulates the school institution, with reference to the writings of Dardot and Laval (2016) and their conception that neoliberalism is based on the constitution of subjects adapted to the modern social form. In this process, a rationality and a psyche are formed based on "accounting subjectivity", establishing new and impersonal forms of domination.

Thus, neoliberalism emerges as the strategy of the modern commodity production system to deal with its structural crises, based on a rationality that cuts across both state institutions and individuals, centered on the adoption of managerial practices and market norms. As a result, neoliberalism demands a broad educational policy, reflected in the internalization of a culture of competition and efficiency, regulating behavior through self-control mechanisms

As a result of this adaptive process, the subject-form has been converted into the form of an "entrepreneurial man", a subject who continually seeks to value his own capital through self-entrepreneurship. It is in this sense that there is a need to problematize the way in which the Life Project has been structuring contemporary training practices, because, as the BNCC (2017, p. 465) points out:

[...] the development of competencies that enable students to actively, critically, creatively and responsibly insert themselves into an increasingly complex and unpredictable world of work, creating possibilities to make their life project viable and to continue learning, so as to be able to adapt flexibly to new conditions of occupation or further training.

The need for students to adapt and be flexible to the precariousness of social reality, especially in relation to the job market, is highlighted throughout the narratives and runs throughout the document. It is on the basis of these needs that the federal regulation for national basic education, the BNCC (2017, p. 466), proposes the construction of

students' Life Project, which seeks to promote entrepreneurship and the ability to take on social risks in a resilient manner, with a view to exercising responsibility for their "[...] employability [...]" and develop an entrepreneurial, ethical and responsible attitude to move in the world of work and in society in general".

The discourse that education at school should provide opportunities for students to develop their own life projects, aiming for an entrepreneurial education that values risk-taking and taking responsibility for their employability, places the responsibility for their own conditions on the students - and also on the teachers. Using this discourse in a normative document shifts the responsibility and costs of the disruption and consequent precariousness of social reality not only onto school institutions, but mainly onto individuals, which leads to the subjectivization of competitive practices as a norm of social conduct.

As already described, the main focus of those who seek to legitimize their ideology lies in understanding social subjectivity, since no power can assert itself and endure by force alone. In this sense, Freire (1996, p. 43) already warned about the immobilizing ideology of the neoliberal discourse, when he pointed out that:

It's important to always be clear that part of the dominant ideological power is to inculcate in the dominated the responsibility for their situation. Hence the guilt they feel at a given moment in their relations with their context and with the dominant classes for finding themselves in this or that disadvantageous situation.

The individualization of responsibility for social precariousness operates as a mechanism of domination: while it makes invisible the socio-economic determinations that engender vulnerability, it transforms the political root of the problem into a personal fault, converting the potential revolt against the system into sterile self-criticism.

Freire's work (1996) denounced the discourse of globalization as market principles. This discourse insisted on convincing those affected by economic policies that there was nothing to be done about the reality marked by the perversity of the neoliberal economy. We understand here that this reality must be questioned if we want to live ethically in a social space that is favorable to the dignified development of human beings. As Freire (1996, p. 11-12) points out:

The fatalistic, immobilizing ideology that animates the neoliberal discourse is loose in the world. With an air of post-modernity, it insists on convincing us that there is nothing we can do against the social reality which, from being historical and cultural, has become 'almost natural' [...]. From the point of view of this ideology, there is only one way out for educational practice: to adapt the student to this reality that

cannot be changed. What needed, therefore, is the technical training that is indispensable for the student's adaptation and survival. The book with which I return to readers is a decisive no to this ideology that denies and disempowers us as people.

The neoliberal discourse is based on the principle of adapting subjects and making them reproducers of the context in which they are inserted, so that they understand reality as a natural consequence of social-historical development. This adaptation is completed through the educational process, which becomes "training" so that subjects can *perform* within their respective roles, if they can get a role. Adapting subjects and turning their education into technical training means denying not only the possibility of a critical education with a view to a general understanding of reality as perversity, but also transferring the role protagonist of history to a historically determined subject. Although Freire (1996) wrote his book more than two decades before the BNCC was approved, his writings provide us with an understanding of the advance of neoliberal practices, which he had been denouncing since the 1990s.

Understanding that human beings are the subjects of history, that they are the ones who produce history and that they have the power to change it, is the ideological substrate for an education that is interested in raising subjects' awareness, rather than just seeking their adaptation. We are conditioned subjects, in our social structures and in our material realities, but we are not, therefore, determined, since history presents itself as a possibility, not as a determination. Freire (1996, p. 29) argues that:

[...] Against the full force of the neoliberal, pragmatic and reactionary fatalist discourse, I insist today, without idealistic deviations, on the need to raise awareness. I insist on its actualization. In fact, as a deepening of the 'prise de conscience' of the world, of facts, of events, conscientization is a human requirement, it is one of the ways to put epistemological curiosity into practice. than being strange, awareness is natural to the being who, unfinished, knows himself to be unfinished.

In his reading of the world, Freire (1996) points out that a being who is the subject of history, with a conscious effort to understand the conditioning that structures impose, is a first step towards overcoming the discourse of the need to adapt through training, which is defended by neoliberal ideology. It is therefore necessary to think about an education that makes subjects aware, which is possible through an education that explores "epistemological curiosity", far removed from the idea of adaptation.

It's not a question of thinking that just educating and making people aware of their reality will be enough to change it, not without taking into account the structural reality of inequality and social injustice, but it does mean understanding that raising awareness of this reality, in order to make it less unfathomable, is a first step towards real action.

The act of *performing* a liberating education means not just adapting, but forming subjects who are capable of observing and, consequently, acting and intervening in reality. Therefore, the educational reality in the form put forward by the BNCC (2017), based on the pedagogy of competences, presents its notion of Life Project reduced to a strategy of adapting to precariousness - in which the individual themselves must manage their employability as a response to the failures of the system - and reveals its antagonistic character to any educational project aimed at human emancipation. Freire (1996, p. 65) had already written about this, saying that:

[...] ideology's ability to soften us up sometimes makes us meekly accept that the globalization of the economy is an invention of its own or of a fate that could not be avoided, an almost metaphysical entity and not a moment of economic development subject, like all capitalist economic production, to a certain political orientation dictated by the interests of those in power.

From the above, it is possible to see that this is one of the ideological objectives contained in the principles of the Life Project to be worked on with students, according to the regulations proposed in the BNCC. With a "veneer" of progress, it aims to form subjectivities in line with neoliberal principles, which denies students their understanding as subjects of history, and this is precisely its limit within a concept of liberating education.

However, understanding the reality of the application of the BNCC and the New High School, how can we subvert this neoliberal logic in order to use the principles of the life project in congruence with liberating education, within the educational regime in which we find ourselves?

3.1 What is a Life Project anyway?

In addition to the limitations already presented in the structuring of the Life Project as part of the elements promoting the general competences of the BNCC and as one of the structuring axes of the New High School, in order to explore the possibilities of conducting the component, we believe it is necessary to provide a basis for what we understand by a

life project and how it is presented in the BNCC. In this way, it will be possible to see, with greater emphasis, the feasibility of subverting its neoliberal purposes and seeking, within its own limits, to apply it in a way that makes sense for the students and for a liberating educational practice.

As such, we can see that the search for meaning and perhaps for a purpose life is a concern that has crossed our minds and generated strong questions for centuries in the history of humanity. This question has been the subject of reflection in philosophy, science and religion, resulting in various theories about the meaning of human existence. Throughout our trajectory, it is possible that, at some point, each individual is confronted with these questions and searches for answers and initiatives that give meaning to this journey. This search, in general, is challenged by ethical and moral dilemmas that involve us, in order to contribute to the construction of our identity as human beings.

In this sense, we believe that the discussion about reflecting on who you are and what your relationship is with the world also crosses over into school education. In fact, it is not the school's duty, as an institution, to solve the dilemmas of life in society. However, it can provide moments of conversation and analysis that aim, beyond recognizing one's own identity, at the limits that are presented to us as people living in this century. By understanding who you are and the reality in which you find yourself, you can identify the resources available to you so that you can create the conditions to expand your field of possibilities, especially those that are limited by the domination of a cultural elite and an oppressive system.

The Life Project, in principle, is treated in the BNCC (2017) as one of the primary objectives of secondary education, constituting one of the principles of the New Secondary Education in the form of one of the structuring axes of this stage of education, as well as constituting one of the elements that make up the structure of one of the General Competencies (General Competency 6). In addition, in some apostilled education systems and in the curricula of some states and municipalities, such as Santa Catarina, we can find the Life Project as a curricular component.

Within the context of the BNCC, the Life Project is linked to the development of the general competences presented in the document, such as valuing diversity, exercising empathy, respecting others and oneself, seeking autonomy and the ability to make conscious and responsible decisions, as well as being considered a structuring element of

this stage, alongside other axes such as entrepreneurship.

In an effort to better elucidate the constituent aspects of what is understood as a Life Project, we present some concepts that relate to its definition and begin by explaining what is presented in the BNCC. As stated above, the document establishes the essential learning, in a progressive manner, that all students must acquire throughout the various stages and modalities of basic education. The BNCC (2017, p. 472-473) addresses aspects related to student development that can be taken on by the school, since it:

[...] is committed to the comprehensive education of students, since it promotes their personal and social development by consolidating and building knowledge, representations and values that will have an impact on their decision-making processes throughout their lives. In this way, the life project is what students aim for, project and redefine for themselves throughout their career, a construction that accompanies the development of their identity(ies), in contexts crossed by aculture and by social demands that are articulated, sometimes to promote, sometimes to constrain their desires.

Therefore, according to the document, one of the school's roles is to help students recognize themselves as subjects, taking into account their identity, cultural background and the importance of social participation and intervention as citizens, so that they can achieve their life goals (Brazil, 2017a). In this sense, the school environment is fundamental for young people to experience interactions with others and with the world in a guided and intentional way, allowing them to glimpse opportunities for growth for the present and the future by valuing diversity.

Logically, these BNCC guidelines should be questioned and reoriented as the teacher weaves their work plan and, of course, verifies the incompatibilities and superficialities that intertwine documentary theory and practice. It is important to point out that in this article we argue that personal growth, which is discussed here, should not be treated as something subsidiary to meritocracy or exclusively personal effort to achieve a goal. Otherwise, we would be contributing to the maintenance of a meritocratic and unequal system that mainly affects students and schools in situations of social vulnerability

In addition to what the BNCC says about life projects and with a view to trying to understand other meanings of the term, Araújo, Arantes and Pinheiro (2020) in their book *Projetos de vida: fundamentos psicológicos, éticos e práticas educacionais (Life projects: psychological, ethical and educational practices)* provide interesting concepts that we can draw on. The authors treat the Life Project as "[...] a compass that guides individuals during

their integral development in the search for a meaning in life" (Araújo; Arantes; Pinheiro, 2020, p. 8), or even which "[...] presupposes a desire to make a difference in the world, to accomplish something of your own that can contribute to others, to society" (Araújo; Arantes; Pinheiro, 2020, p.12). In this sense, there is a personal or philosophical reflection that can help to understand life in society, who you are and can also unveil the material structures that limit or make it impossible to exercise your rights as a citizen.

Working on life projects in schools, whether in a curricular component or across other projects, can represent an attempt to include personal and social issues in students' education. In this way, they are encouraged to reflect on their goals, dreams and future prospects. Of course, it is important that these reflections start from the place, be it territorial, class or race, in which the individual is situated. As Hooks (2017, p. 22) elucidates, reflection and action need to be dialogical, in constant conversation, because "[...] the engaged voice is not fixed and absolute. It must always be changing, always in dialog with the world outside." It is through reflecting on what one is that the student can glimpse an improvement - not in the meritocratic sense, but in the emancipatory sense - as an individual, as a community, as a social whole.

It's important to note that, in the considerations outlined by the BNCC (2017) and the authors in question, we see that both deal with the life project as a way of building intentions that start from the individual level, but which bring benefits to the collective. In this logic, collectivity has an interconnection with what is often referred to as "youth protagonism". This protagonism is treated by the guiding documents in an individualistic and uncritical way, which makes it difficult to implement Life Project activities and classes that really seek to reflect on the unequal system in which we are inserted.

Despite the challenges, we understand, based on Freire (2016), that dealing with Life Projects in the school environment can be linked to the importance of listening to the student and giving credibility to their story, as well as recognizing the school as a space for expanding the individual's authenticity and capabilities. It can therefore be a tool for promoting a liberating education in the neoliberal reality in which we find ourselves. Through pedagogical activities that involve field research and debates on relevant social issues - as well as as discussions that promote critical reflection on the construction of identity - the school can enable students to recognize themselves as subjects capable of analyzing their reality. It is also possible to strengthen the formation of citizens capable of

actively participating in social transformation and building a fairer and more equal society.

We must not forget to mention that we are not trying to create the illusory expectation of building an educational path that alone will form emancipated, conscious individuals who are free from oppression. An interesting point for the classroom teacher is to remember that, as Freire and Shor (1986, p. 76) tell us, education is a constant transfer from theory to practice, because:

[...] from the moment we enter the classroom, from the moment you say to the students: "Hello, how are you?", you necessarily start an aesthetic game. And this is because you are an educator who has to play a strategic and directive role in liberating pedagogy. Thus, education is simultaneously a certain theory of knowledge put into practice, a political act and an aesthetic act.

The classroom is a space for reflection, learning and personal and collective experiences. Even so, it is permeated by issues that go beyond educational limits, since we deal with beings who are permeated by historical, cultural and practical conditioning, such as access to quality health care, housing, etc. We therefore stress that an educational approach centered on freedom has the potential to contribute to grassroots politics, since awareness implies a willingness to understand social structures as forms of domination and violence. However, as Wellffor (2020) points out, it is important to emphasize that it is not the sole responsibility of educators to guide this awareness along a path specifically focused on political issues. There are other institutions and instances that can also contribute to reflections in this area.

3.2 Possibilities for liberating education through Life Project classes

In this scenario, universal basic education becomes an important instrument in the process of social formation and subjectivation. By analyzing the policies and practices that the neoliberal system develops socially, it is possible to see that it aims to introduce conditions of competitiveness along market lines. Investments are now justified by their return in the form of human capital, which is disseminated in international tests as a demonstration of the quality of the national workforce, by highlighting the ability to adapt to the demands of the labor market in an economical way.

With the approval of the New High School in 2017 and its gradual implementation, the Life Project was constituted as a structuring element in the BNCC (2017), aligning itself

with the notion of an education for adaptation to the detriment of an education for the denaturalization of the social. However, a concern arises in our reading and studies when we consider it plausible to question how the future practices of teachers in the classroom, arising from the implementation of the New High School, can be inferred solely from a document, of a summarizing nature, with topics with little development as its basic writing. Is it possible, then, to create classes that can be subversive or, at least, not limited only by these regulations?

Notably, the reading and analysis of the BNCC, referring to the Life Project, converge towards the promotion of adaptive resilience among students. However, another question arises: is it possible that, with guidance, studies and subsequent suggestions for the classes of the component in question, teachers, based on a liberating praxis, can subvert the guidelines established by the BNCC in the educational contexts of the New High School?

In this sense, based on these questions, what we are seeking to raise in this discussion are not closed and reductive practices, applied without reflection in an adaptive context, but critical paths permeated by theory that understand the role of education as one of the means of rebelling against the structure of reality. In agreement with Freire (2020), the educational perspective must necessarily encompass the analysis of the concrete oppression that affects individuals and also reflect the manifestation of their effort to seek liberation.

A point to be made at the core of the reflection, biased by the critical understanding of reality as discussed in the sections above, is the lack of reliable references to help the classroom teacher to deliver meetings that are interconnected with a liberating practice. While justifiable and coherent criticism is directed at the BNCC, on the other hand, it has already been put into practice, having to be used in planning and didactic sequences by several teachers. Although it's frustrating, the educational environment, the school and classroom practices don't stop to wait for a radical change to happen or for the documents to be revised; the school work routine continues despite them. Even so, we emphasize the role of the school as an integral part of social change, as Freire (2020) and hooks (2017) support, which leads us to reflect on possible paths for a liberating practice in Life Project classes. The school emerges as one of the indispensable components of transformations and, for this reason, its stance must be one of critical analysis, rather than a passive one.

We reiterate here our conviction that it is not only the school that is capable of transforming society. Following this approach entails significant risks, since it places total responsibility for social transformation on the school, as well as on teachers, and shifts the burden of intervention and change in social dynamics away from other social and governmental bodies. If the school is popularly known as "the light at the end of the tunnel", then it is also responsible for all the mistakes until it reaches this fullness, which is as utopian as it is dangerous. We don't intend to impose on the school environment and education professionals the lonely burden of the longed-for social change. On the contrary, we will try to bring subversive possibilities and reflections, based on *Freire's* theory, to the system and the document in vogue, which can be raised within the Life Project work, in an attempt to prevent it from becoming an adaptive, individualistic space that controls subjectivities. Students of this time, which can be understood as contemporaneity, must also have the opportunity to study in a critical and transformative environment. According to Freire (2020), the classroom must contribute to the vision of freedom, considering it as the matrix that gives meaning to an educational practice, whose effectiveness and efficacy are intrinsically linked to the free and critical participation of students.

Since our life journey does not follow a strictly linear and objective course, we can choose to develop dialogues that allow us to navigate this complex reality, starting with recognizing the oppressions, patterns and structures present, aiming for a liberating education. According to Freire (2020), this education seeks to enable individuals to become critical and aware of their reality, encouraging them to become agents of transformation in their communities and society as a whole. There, it is understood that education should not be a passive process of depositing information in students, but rather a dialog between educator and student. We align our thinking with Freire's (2020, p.116) belief that:

Authentic education, let's repeat, doesn't happen from A to B or from A to B, but from A to B, mediated by the world. A world that impresses and challenges each other, giving rise to visions or points of view about it. Visions impregnated with anxieties, doubts, hopes or despairs that imply significant themes, on the basis of which the program content of education will be constituted.

Thinking about Life Project classes that move in this direction, in addition to transgressing the liberal and market-driven idea present in official documents and in the educational structure itself, allows teachers to seek to carry out their work in a critical and

liberating way, even if the system does not support spaces with this effect. And we say this not with the intention of passively agreeing with the system and accepting its immutability, but with the understanding that, in the reality of educators, it is not always feasible to reject teaching a new component or prevent it from being part of the school curriculum, for various reasons. As this subject is incorporated, it is essential that professionals take it on with the understanding that the students who have studied it should not be subjugated, immobilized or passively shaped by it.

In this way, our approach can differ from the expectations of a neoliberal logic based on competitive practices, according to the documents and their operational instances. In a scenario favorable to its application, a problematizing education can be proposed, as Freire (2020) suggests, in which students are encouraged to question, reflect on and critically analyze their reality, identifying injustices and inequalities and looking for ways to transform them.

In this sense, educational practice (conceived as a space that recognizes and values human potential) must take into account that the subjects' field of action is minimal; but from this point on, it is possible to seek to expand it. From this perspective, the educational process needs to adopt a stance that allows the subject to consciously create themselves.

Having said that, we need to think about ways to ensure that Life Project classes don't become a neoliberal siege. One of the initial and interesting points is the objective we can give this component. When thinking about strategies to approach it in class, Araújo, Arantes and Pinheiro (2020) point out that, through it, students can come across the most promising and leveraging parts of themselves. By recognizing their potential and their limitations - whether personal or social - will be able to reflect and act more emphatically on their reality. According to Freire (2020), becoming aware of one's own "being-in-the-world" is a fundamental step towards recognizing the oppressive relationships that shape the student's reality. Thus, by outlining their Life Project and reflecting on life, it is possible to think of ways, collective ones, to combat the oppressions they experience or, at least, to identify them more clearly.

We propose thinking of Life Project classes as liberating praxis, in which students, by problematizing their reality, discover themselves as historical subjects capable of

rewriting their collective destinies. As an example, in a Life Project class, it is

possible to spark a conversation about the standards present in society that can imprison human beings, be they market, aesthetic, racial or gender standards. In this sense, this class activity will provide an existential experience based on the notion of "being": asking questions about one's own identity, that of others and that of the world around them. This does not imply, by nature, the mere achievement of short-term goals and objectives, as the document seems to say, but rather the building of intrinsic and extrinsic mechanisms to face the vicissitudes of everyday life. In this space, then, teachers and students learn and contribute to the construction of knowledge.

Another lesson alternative is to create and mediate discussions about how social structures influence students' future projects (and ours!). It is possible to organize conversation circles where young people share their life experiences and, based on them, collectively identify common challenges in their community, such as lack of access to university or precariousness in the job market. It is important, of course, that these reflections are articulated with social data and critical texts, allowing students to perceive the structural roots of their difficulties and visualize possibilities for collective action to transform them.

Another path to consider is working with narratives that denaturalize the dominant ideology, such as those by authors Ailton Krenak, Conceição Evaristo, Carolina Maria de Jesus, among others, taking into account their specificities. A comparative analysis of the life stories of people from different social contexts can be proposed, highlighting how factors such as class, race and gender are intertwined in the realization of unequal trajectories. In empirical terms, carrying out field research aimed at deepening the themes worked on in class, in a more empirical context, can be interesting to strengthen this critical and reflective process on the part of the students.

These suggested paths should always be based on the teacher's observation and knowledge of their class, school and community. In this way, we can collaborate with the *Freirean* principle that education should be an instrument of liberation, forming not just professionals, but citizens who are aware of and active in society.

With the above in mind and in agreement with Freire (2020), we can conceive of education as a means of giving individuals the ability to make choices and exercise control

over their own actions. The paths described here are the fruit of theoretical reflections, but, we stress, it is important that each teacher reflects on their classroom and their place of work, since "[...] engaged pedagogy affirms that each classroom is different, that strategies must be constantly modified, invented and (re)conceptualized to account for each new teaching experience" (hooks, 2017, p. 21). We believe that, with activities that can make students aware of their identity, it becomes more emphatic for them to recognize the forms of oppression to which they are subject and to discern ways of challenging them through their own freedom.

4 Final considerations

Due to the need for efficiency and economic return, education policies have come to be seen as a financial investment. In this process, education has become disputed, to the extent that this institution is understood as an important instrument in the process of formation and subjectivation of social conduct, which is characterized by values specific to neoliberal logic, such as competitiveness and entrepreneurship as norms of conduct.

An important educational tool that emerged within this context was the Life Project, introduced into the educational sphere with a view to developing an entrepreneurial subjectivity in students. This subjectivity, according to a deeper analysis of the guiding document, is based on training subjects to adapt to the precarious and ever-changing job market, transferring the responsibility for social precariousness to themselves, diverting attention from the structural causes of social inequalities.

This is where the importance of raising people's awareness of reality lies, as a first step towards real action and social transformation, making it possible to subvert the neoliberal logic in education. Based on the growing importance that the Life Project element represents in Brazilian secondary education, when properly conducted as a curricular component or item to be worked on in class, it can be a tool to promote students' personal and social development, enabling them to make conscious and responsible decisions, in congruence with a liberating education within the existing educational context.

It is important that educators are able to distance themselves from the individualistic or meritocratic traps that are set in the way the Life Project is articulated, as

presented in the previous sections, which end up reinforcing existing inequalities., the Life Project can be approached critically, as suggested in the sections above, in a way that takes into account the social, economic and political context in which students are inserted. It is also possible to emphasize the importance of an education that provides students with an analysis and understanding of the structures of domination and violence present in society.

Although education alone cannot solve all social problems and should not assume sole responsibility for guiding students through political issues, it can play a fundamental role in the formation of critical, aware and engaged citizens, capable of contributing to the construction of a fairer and more equal society. Therefore, the Life Project in education, which is already validated by the BNCC normative document, can be an opportunity for students to explore not only their personal aspirations, but also their potential as agents of social transformation. By integrating a critical and reflective approach to the Life Project, the category can contribute to the formation of a generation committed to building a more inclusive and equitable world.

This subversive process must go beyond the neoliberal perspective and market focus that is visibly present in official educational documents. Teachers, then, can adopt a critical and emancipatory approach, as shown through some of the examples and authors suggested, even when considering the restrictions inherent in the educational system, by not passively suppressing, limiting or molding students. To this end, we realize that working with Life Projects, within this liberating and emancipatory perspective, involves raising awareness of the identities and forms of oppression to which we are subject, as well as looking for ways to challenge them through our own freedom. We understand that each classroom is unique and teaching strategies must be adapted to the specific needs and experiences of the school communities in which the students are located

In order to obtain empirical results of the real implementation of an education that aims to be liberating, within the neoliberal reality presented in which the Life Project is inserted, it was necessary to carry out field research, preferably with teachers working in basic education with the component or objectives of the Life Project. However, it was not possible to carry this out in this article, as our aim was to raise questions so that we could critically reflect on the reality. This work opens up a field for future studies that can delve

deeper, either empirically or bibliographically, into the questions presented here.

As the inclusion of them gains ground in the school environment, either as an objective to be met or as a curricular component, it becomes essential for teachers to address it, creating conditions so that lessons are valid and, as far as possible, potentially capable of providing analysis, or even seeing this neoliberal reality that surrounds Brazilian education. We understand here that one of the points of liberating education lies in enabling students to understand their own realities, identify their potential for transformation and act in an informed and committed way in the social, political and economic conditions that surround them. Thus, this approach, linked to the Life Project component, can promote awareness, nurture autonomy and encourage the active participation of individuals in building a fairer and more equitable society.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The entire dataset supporting the results of this study has been published in the article itself.

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