

PÂMELLA PASSOS • AMANDA MENDONÇA

The teacher is the ENEMY

AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER
PERSECUTION IN BRAZIL



PÂMELLA PASSOS • AMANDA MENDONÇA

The teacher is the ENEMY

AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER
PERSECUTION IN BRAZIL



All rights of this edition reserved
to MV Serviços e Editora Ltda.

DESIGN

Patrícia Oliveira

CIP-BRASIL. CATALOGAÇÃO NA PUBLICAÇÃO
SINDICATO NACIONAL DOS EDITORES DE LIVROS, RJ
Elaborado por Meri Gleice Rodrigues de Souza — CRB 7/6439

P323p

Passos, Pâmella

The teacher is the enemy! [recurso eletrônico] : an analysis of teacher persecution in Brazil / Pâmella Passos, Amanda Mendonça ; tradução Victor Schlude. – 1. ed. – Rio de Janeiro : Mórula, 2021.

recurso digital ; 5,5 MB

Tradução de: O professor é o inimigo!

Formato: epub

Requisitos do sistema: adobe digital editions

Modo de acesso: world wide web

Inclui bibliografia

ISBN 978-65-86464-70-2 (recurso eletrônico)

1. Professores – Brasil. 2. Censura – Brasil. 3. Educação – Aspectos sociais – Brasil. 4. Conservantismo – Brasil. 5. Livros eletrônicos. I. Mendonça, Amanda. II. Título.

21-74821

CDD: 379.260981

CDU: 37.014.1(81)



Rua Teotônio Regadas 26 sala 904
20021-360 _ Lapa _ Rio de Janeiro _ RJ
www.morula.com.br _ [contato@morula.com.br](mailto: contato@morula.com.br)
[/morulaeditorial](https://www.facebook.com/morulaeditorial) @morula_editorial

CONTENTS

- 5 AUTHORS' NOTES
- 6 **The construction of teachers as enemies**
- 15 **United Against the democratic education:
getting to know the Brazilian *conservative coalition***
- 21 **Moral panic is not smokescreen: strategies
of neoconservatism**
- 24 **The ongoing disdemocracy and its impacts
on education**
- 26 REFERENCES
- 28 ABOUT THE AUTHORS

AUTHORS' NOTES

This publication is the result of a commitment we have with the socialization of the academic production in our country. As researchers of the research group Technology, Education and Culture (CPTEC/IFRJ), we have been investigating the impacts of the conservative advances in the country during the last years and its repercussions in Brazilian education.

The post-doctoral internship in Education that we did in 2020 at the Federal Fluminense University (UFF) dialogued directly with this theme. Although with different projects, our researches converged in reflections about the persecution of teachers and its consequences in Brazilian democracy. The pages that follow seek to share the conclusions, albeit provisional, that we have reached.

We must thank the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Rio de Janeiro (IFRJ), especially the Rio de Janeiro Campus, which, by financing the extension project “II Seminar on Democratic Education and Human Rights” made the publication of this book possible.

We hope that this reading is an invitation to fight for a democratic education committed to the defense of Human Rights.

PÂMELLA PASSOS AND AMANDA MENDONÇA

The construction of teachers as enemies

In recent years, Brazil has experienced a situation that brings together serious and constant episodes of attacks on human rights. In addition to this factor, we have the withdrawal of basic social rights, such as access to food, housing, health, education, work, among others. A scenario where the dismantling of the State, social *deprotection*, and the insecurity of the population are directed towards a supposed threat of destruction of the family and the hegemonic moral order.

Thus, feelings such as fear, the fear of a possible change in the social structures known by most of the population, have been produced and triggered as part of the ongoing power project in the country. A significant part of this project, which guarantees its existence, consists of building an enemy. And it is in this context that the “teacher indoctrinator”, or new enemy, has gained notoriety in recent years in Brazil.

To talk about the construction of this new enemy, it is necessary to briefly recover the trajectory of one of the main responsible for this invention: the School without Party Movement- SWPM. According to Penna (2016), the movement continued for some time without great expression, finding a greater echo in society in three moments: in the controversy generated in 2007 by the column of journalist Ali Kamel in the newspaper *O Globo*¹, in which he made tough criticism of Mario Schmidt's collection of coursebooks New Critical History (*Nova História Crítica*); the second moment would have occurred in

1. Full link to the story: <https://oglobo.globo.com/sociedade/educacao/livro-didatico-reprovado-pelo-mec-continua-sendo-usado-em-salas-de-aula-do-brasil-4153370>.

the controversy involving the distribution of the anti-homophobia kit² by the Ministry of Education in 2011 and lastly, in 2014, during the political crisis and the polarization of society around the presidential campaigns of then-President Dilma Rousseff and the Senator Aécio Neves. We believe it is relevant to point out that the clashes surrounding the National Education Plan, also approved in 2014³, are part of this framework of episodes that contributed to leveraging the social and political expressiveness of MESP.

This movement, by defending supposed pedagogical neutrality, accuses educators of influencing their students by exercising persuasive power over them compared to pathology, as we can see in the following excerpt:

Victim of a true “intellectual kidnapping”, the indoctrinated student almost always develops, concerning the teacher/indoctrinator, an intense affective connection. As it has already been said about Stockholm Syndrome, depending on the degree of identification with the kidnapper, the victim can deny that the kidnapper is wrong, admitting that the possible liberators and their insistence on punishing the kidnapper are, in fact, responsible. for your situation. Similarly, many students not only refuse to admit that they are being manipulated by their teachers but are furious in their defense when someone shows them what is going on. (SCHOOL WITHOUT PARTY, 2016).

Comparing the teacher-student relationship with that of a kidnapped-kidnapper, MESP creates a scenario in which families are called upon to save and defend their children from this intellectual violence. It is noted that the two main pillars of the project are: the sovereignty of the family, which overrides the student's right to obtain elements to produce autonomously his world-view, and a supposed idea of “neutrality” of the teachers, of the curricula and pedagogical projects.

-
2. Link to the presentation of the program School Without Homophobia: http://www.mpf.mp.br/pfdc/eventos/2011/audiencia-publica-avaliacao-programas-federais-respeito-diversidade-sexual-nas-escolas/apresentacoes/rodrigo-oliveira-mec/at_download/file and to the booklet “School Without Homophobia” which integrated the kit developed by MEC: <https://nova-escola-producao.s3.amazonaws.com/bGjtqbyAxV88KSj5FGExAhHNjzPvYs2V8ZuQd3TMGj2hHeySJ6cuArsggvfw/escola-sem-homofobia-mec.pdf>.
 3. Link to the National Education Plan: <http://pne.mec.gov.br/18-planos-subnacionais-de-educacao/543-plano-nacional-de-educacao-lei-n-13-005-2014>.

It is also important to say that MESP started to bring together a diversity of actors, fundamentally combining sectors of the country's intellectual and party rights, the Christian religious summit, sectors of the Brazilian business community, among others. The combined performance of agents through a *conservative coalition* in defense of the "neutral school". Michel Apple, still in the 1990s, already advocated for this coalition by demarcating the main aspects that would differentiate neoliberals and neoconservatives. According to the author, the latter, despite agreeing with an emphasis on economics, have as their main issue "cultural restoration".

For Apple 1994), there would be a coalition made up of entrepreneurs, new rights, intellectuals, among others, acting together in the formulation of educational policies that would resume a romanticized version of schooling. An alliance therefore guided by the rescue, for example, the so-called "teacher's domain", the knowledge of high "status", the use of control mechanisms on the knowledge, the morals, and the values.

The neoconservative ideas in force according to Apple in the 1990s, such as the use of discipline to return to a romanticized past of a home, family, and the "ideal school", preserving its main axis in cultural "restoration", were updated from the mid-2000s, acquiring new contours and expressions, as in the case of MESP, and extolling the figure of the teacher as the enemy.

It is essential to mention hands that to a large extent, the MESP and the projects of law arising from it, have ensured the support of the company's shares with the argument that education is not one exclusive task of the State. According to its defenders, the State must promote qualified education, but in the exercise of this duty, it needs the "contribution" of families.

In this context, the figure of the *indoctrinating teacher was created*, one who imposes themes and contents that contradict the will and belief of families. This view, that it is up to the family to decide on what the children can learn or not, as one of the movement's slogans points out: "my children my rules", becomes one of the structuring axes of this agenda and MESP's projects.

A scenario where the family is at risk is consolidated; a scenario where the education of children is in danger and the teacher is the important piece of this threat. Thus, we start to watch a series of episodes of persecution to these professionals and of censorship at schools. At the beginning of September of 2019, for instance, the governor of São Paulo, João Doria (PSDB), ordered the

withdrawal of science textbooks for the 8th grade of Middle School⁴, because, according to him, the textbooks brought concepts of biological sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. In the same year, the then-mayor of Rio de Janeiro, Marcelo Crivella (Republicanos), considered the comic book “Avengers: the children’s crusade”, in which two male characters of the saga are in a relationship and were pictured kissing in a marketing panel of the story, had sexual content for minors and ordered that the book was withdrawn of the Biennial Book Fair⁵.

In this same context the executive secretary of the Ministry of Education (MEC), Antonio Paulo Vogel said that the government would elaborate a new announcement of the National Program of Coursebooks and Teaching Materials (PNLD) so that textbooks distributed in schools across the country would be free from “indoctrination”. Following the same line of thought, the former Minister of Education, Abraham Weintraub reiterated the speech of President Jair Bolsonaro (PSL) about the need for changes in textbooks due to their “excessive” content and stated in an interview: “Who educates is the family, the school teaches. We teach how to read, write and teach an occupation. The ‘gay kit’ exits and the family reading enters”.⁶

Recently, in February 2021, a new announcement of the National Program of Coursebooks and Teaching Materials (PNLD) was published. The text proposed by MEC removes the prohibition that prevailed in previous calls for submissions that the selected works contain sexism, racism, and regional prejudice. On the other hand, the announcement provides that the coursebooks include the defense of the family and the obligation to promote “civic values, such as respect, patriotism, citizenship, solidarity, and responsibility”.

4. Doria orders the withdrawal of Science booklet which approaches sexual diversity: “We do not accept the apology to gender ideology”. G1, Sept. 3rd, 2019. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/sp/sao-paulo/noticia/2019/09/03/doria-manda-recolher-livros-de-ciencia-que-fala-sobre-diversidade-sexual-nao-aceitamos-apologia-a-ideologia-de-genero.ghtml>. Accessed in Nov. 4th, 2020.

5. Marcelo Crivella, mayor of Rio, orders the withdrawal of book at the Biennial and generates protests. G1, 06 de Sept. 6th, 2019. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/jornal-nacional/noticia/2019/09/06/marcelo-crivella-prefeito-do-rio-manda-recolher-livro-da-bienal-e-gera-protestos.ghtml>. Accessed in: Nov. 4th, 2020.

6. <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/sai-o-kit-gay-entra-a-leitura-em-familia-diz-ministro-da-educacao/>.

From the social repercussions of the projects and MESP⁷ itself, we consider that there is an expansion in the number of adherents of this discourse. Despite the absence of official data and surveys of advocates of this movement, we can measure its support through their engagement in their social media. In MESP's profile recently created on Instagram, in 2020, the movement already has 51.3 thousand followers. The Twitter account of the movement had 116.100 thousand followers. In addition, MESP had a Facebook account, which was deactivated in 2019, with 236,981 thousand followers⁸.

It should be noted that even with actions in the legal field that dismantle the constitutionality of such projects, in practice and within the scope of many schools they are already in effect. The persecutory and denouncing climate about teachers is increasingly reported by them, who have been prevented, sometimes in a veiled way, from addressing themes, having their lives exposed in newspapers, social media and even suffering legal processes for ideological indoctrination.

The movement counts with an extensive network of deputies, digital influencers, and other groups (such as the Free Brazil Movement⁹). On all these fronts, their agents encourage, among other things, students to film and report their teachers¹⁰. President Bolsonaro himself, an enthusiast of the school without a party, has already shared a video on his social networks that expose a teacher and then posted: "Teachers have to teach, not indoctrinate"¹¹.

In our hypothesis, the speeches given by public figures occupying positions in the executive and legislative branches have been accompanied by an increase in open episodes of persecution of teachers across the country. To support our

7. By the choice of the authors, the original syllable of the movement was maintained.

8. Data collected in December 2020.

9. Brazilian Political movement created in 2014 which defends the economic liberalism and the republicanism. In its foundation manifest, 5 objectives are found: "free and independent press, economic freedom, separation of powers, free and idoneous elections and the end of direct and indirect subsidies for dictatorships. The movement is in the right political spectrum. Link to its official page: <https://mbl.org.br/>.

10. Regarding this actions, the movement Teachers Against the School Without Party denounces censorship in the article available at: <https://profcontraoesp.org/2020/03/29/censura-e-gravacao-de-aulas/> Access in: 02/17/2021.

11. Video posted in the personal social media of the president Jair Bolsonaro at 09/28/2019: <https://twitter.com/jairbolsonaro/status/1122466597644505089>.

hypothesis, we present articles that the media started to disseminate, containing reports from teachers who suffered some cases of persecution.

The first case we highlighted happened in 2018 with the English and literature teacher of two private schools in the state of São Paulo. The teacher faced accusations and threats from student representatives; it was mentioned that the teacher had allegedly delivered a speech against Bolsonaro during his classes; consequently, it was announced that armed family members would come to the school to approach him. According to the teacher, interviewed by *El País*:

“I arrived and the students were very agitated and happy, singing victory. I tried to start my class and wouldn’t let me. I tried to talk and argue that we live in a democratic country, mas They shouted that they wanted dictatorship. “Anything I told them they would reply with ‘oh, your communist!”¹²

In 2019, it was the turn of a history teacher from the municipal network of Contagem, in Minas Gerais, to be denounced by parents of students. The basis of the “denunciation” was a test applied by the teacher where, utilizing cartoons, she criticized President Jair Bolsonaro¹³. The following year, persecution occurred with an English teacher from the interior of São Paulo¹⁴. The teacher asked 8th-grade students to answer a questionnaire and do a survey at home on some concepts and historical currents of feminism.

In an interview with *El País*, she states that “Already in this process, the principal called me to warn that there was a complaint from the mothers of students”. Then, she asked her to go to the Department of Education, because a father had filed a complaint with the Ombudsman. The complaint stated that the teacher took advantage of her classes to teach about feminism and “gender ideology”.

In higher education, the situation of persecution and denunciation has also been consolidated. One of the recent episodes in this segment involves Professor Marlene de Fáveri, whose name was widely publicized due to a lawsuit against

12. Available at: https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2019/05/14/politica/1557790165_316536.html. Access in: 02/17/2021

13. Available at: <https://bhaz.com.br/2019/10/24/professora-denunciada-prova-bolsonaro/#gref>. Access in: 02/17/2021

14. Available at: <https://www.pragmatismopolitico.com.br/2020/03/professora-de-ingles-perseguida-feminismo-mbl.html>. Access in: 02/17/2021

her¹⁵. Even though the teacher had a well-recognized professional trajectory in the field of gender studies and feminism, she was accused of ideological indoctrination by a master advisee. The student sued the court alleging she was persecuted for not being a feminist¹⁶. Fáveri had classes recorded without her authorization, contents and course programs exposed, and need to request a work leave from the University.

These are small samples of the national scenario of persecution of teachers in Brazil. As common aspects, we identified the fact that the affected teachers point to the use of the internet and social media as the main spark for persecution. The current “virtual lynching” is configured today as one of the greatest fears of these teachers. In general, they are small excerpts from the classes that are shared in a decontextualized way and accompanied by accusations of “indoctrination” or of teaching “gender ideology”. Another relevant point mentioned but the countless teachers involved in the communication of families via Whatsapp groups, which would be facilitating the dissemination of these videos and distorted information. We also highlight that the online teaching context imposed by the health crisis Covid-19 such a situation intensified due to the demand for recorded lessons and/or the exposure of the teachers in online meetings.

What we observe in our teaching practice and in socializing with colleagues in the exercise of what we are calling pedagogical self-censorship. We understand pedagogical self-censorship as the movement by which teachers stop working with certain themes, even if they are provided for in the curriculum of their discipline, thus seeking to avoid accusations of indoctrination and/or exposure, especially on social media.

In this context, we started to have a series of “sensitive themes” that receive such an adjective due to the conjuncture of conservative advance and attacks on democratic education. In the hall of the themes that come to be considered sensitive, in the field of History we could highlight slavery, dictatorships, Nazism, among others. (PASSOS & GUIGUES, 2021)

15. Available at: <https://iddh.org.br/acao-de-aluna-contra-professora-sob-alegacoes-de-intolerancia-e-perseguicao-religiosa-e-politico-ideologica/>. Access at: 02/17/2021

16. <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2018/10/briga-judicial-entre-professora-e-aluna-ilustra-racha-politico-no-pais.shtml>. Acesso em 02/04/2021.

We have also identified a significantly larger number of female teachers suffering from these persecutions. According to the 2020 school census 2020¹⁷, 2,189,005 teachers were registered in basic Brazilian education. From these, 593 thousand work in early childhood education and, according to the census data, 96.4% are female and 3.6% male. Primary education has 1,378,812 teachers, 88.1% of whom are female and 11.9% of whom are male. Concerning the last stage of basic education, secondary education, 57.8% of the total of 505,782 teachers are female and 42.2% male.

These numbers reaffirm a fact of general knowledge in the educational field: women are the majority in teaching, especially in early childhood education and the first segment, stages of schooling that are still very much associated with the idea of care

Taking as an example the teacher position, especially in Early Childhood Education and Initial Series, the relationship that society makes of the women's image with motherhood and caring leads us to understand this image as more appropriate to educate children at a younger age. The historical process of feminization of teaching takes place from the moment that the association of teaching activity as a profession that the woman was allowed to follow since the functions to be performed at school would be similar to the functions to be performed at home. (SILVA, M. C.; MENDES, O. M., 2015),

The feminization of the teaching profession, for us, is a central element in this context of persecution and harassment. A scenario that intensifies according to the type of employment relationship established and with the network, private or public. For example, in more precarious and unstable relationships, as in the case of teachers hired on a temporary or probationary basis, circumstances that can facilitate harassment and persecution. In addition, in a large part of the private education network, the environment reported by several teachers is one of control and surveillance.

We have no intention of using these small examples to develop a comprehensive framework about the persecution of teachers in Brazil. Our intention

17. https://download.inep.gov.br/publicacoes/institucionais/estatisticas_e_indicadores/resumo_tecnico_censo_escolar_2020.pdf

is, through these examples, to raise elements that structure this scenario. In other words, our objective is to identify the period of intensification of these persecutions and their main tools and arguments. With this, we aim to contribute to the analysis of how such persecutions occur; and also, in the future production of data, in which educational segments, knowledge areas, and regions of the country (towns and cities) these persecutions have been occurring more frequently.

United Against the democratic education: getting to know the Brazilian *conservative coalition*

To better understand the aforementioned *conservative coalition* and to contribute to analyzes of the recent political and educational scene in Brazil, we used a concept initially formulated in the USA, in the second half of the 20th century, neoconservatism. At first, this concept was linked to attempts to write the reactions of conservative American intellectuals to counterculture movements. However, today it helps us to think about the types of political coalitions established between different actors, to maintain the patriarchal order and the capitalist system.

We consider it essential to recognize the limitations of the term, but it allows us to characterize the phenomenon of a new moral agenda in its emergence, highlighting the various coalitions that support it in a specific context, such as the case of Brazil. In addition, it contributes to looking at the relationship between Christian conservatism and liberal individualism, between anti-pluralism and neoliberalism. These can be considered central elements of the cultural, social, and economic structure of our country.

According to Apple (2001), neoconservatism involves defensive actions and pro *status quo* initiatives. Despite the agreement with neoliberal economics, the neoconservatives advocate a strong State in certain areas, especially those that are connected with standards, values, and collective behaviors. The author points out that neoconservatives constitute an alliance in favor of conservative restructuring, where education has a prominent place. In this way, they perform to the school curriculum for being supposedly anti-family and for the lack of patriotism. In addition, the agents converge in *the conservative coalition*, whose main objectives are to remove educational policies from public debate and place them as a “choice” of parents.

Today is no different than it was in the past. A “new” set of commitments, a new alliance, and a new power bloc have already been formed and are increasingly influencing education and all social things. This power bloc combines multiple fractions of capital, neoconservative intellectuals who want a “return” to the highest standards and a “common culture”, authoritarian populist religious conservatives who are deeply concerned with the preservation of their traditions. (APPLE, 2015, page 21).

Flavia Biroli *et al* (2020), when exploring neoconservatism, highlighted that the alliance between neoliberals and conservatives, which engenders neoconservatism, is guided by convergence in a crisis narrative that has the family as its locus. This analysis, in particular, is of our interest since it raises elements of the country’s current scenario, where the threat to the family is a central part of an ongoing power project.

Still, according to the analysis proposed by Biroli *et al* (2020), neoconservatism has among its main characteristics alliances and affinities between different sectors. It is possible to observe, as part of the neoconservative legal machinery, a set of actors that mobilize people through the defense of a reproductive and matrimonial morality. Among these, Christian politicians, confessional jurists. In the case of Brazil, this phenomenon involves the significant presence of Catholic and Evangelical actors acting jointly as policy makers and articulators of the main political guidelines and current conservative actions.

In this sense, it is interesting to think about this neoconservative characteristic, which allows contemporary joint actions of Christian religious conservatism. This fact is relevant because, until the period of re-democratization in the country, the alliance between Catholic and Evangelical actors was strained by the vertiginous growth of the latter, especially in the neo-Pentecostal currents. The demographic and political growth of evangelicals generated conflicts both within the field of religion as with other fields, impacting society as a whole. Thus, the last decades of the twentieth century were marked by numerous attempts to answer evangelical growth, where Catholic leaders began to invest in the recovery of lost ground.

The process that we have described regarding the period of our re-democratization has to do with “decatholization”, which remained underway in the following decades. In this sense, it is worth mentioning hands that although Brazil is a country still predominantly Catholic, recent surveys of IBGE show

that since the 70s, Catholicism growth rates do not follow the growth of the population. Researchers believe that, by 2030, Catholics will be less than 50% of the Brazilian population and that by 2040 they will be tied with Evangelicals (MENDONÇA, 2017).

However, this situation is altered in this Brazilian neoconservative context, promoting conjunctural alliances between Catholics and traditionalist Evangelicals around topics such as the defense of the heterosexual family, life from conception, and Christian morality. It draws attention, therefore, to this neoconservative characteristic of operating by unifying these actors in the debate and political action, as if there were no moral disputes within Catholicism and Pentecostalism as well as between them.

Another important trait that differentiates the conservatism experienced today from those experienced at other times in our history is what Biroli *et al* (2020) called the pronounced “jurisification” of morality. The expression refers to the movement of the neoconservatives in taking the debate on the moral regulation of sexuality to the field of law.

On this point, it is important to highlight the role of the Catholic Church, through the Vatican before the Multilateral Organisms such as the United Nations Organization - UN and the Organization of American States - OAS. With the privilege of being a religious institution with representation on the councils and deliberative spaces of these Organisms, the Catholic summit has a marked influence on the conservative movement, taking, among other agendas, the fight against the “gender ideology” to these international organizations.

It is not our aim in this text to deepen this item, which for us is extremely relevant and deserves a detailed study. However, we consider it important to mention this neoconservative aspect, as it dialogues with the process underway in education. In other words, in the same way that the field of law/legal fields started to be triggered in an attempt to legalize universal sexual morality, based on the defense of the natural family and sexuality linked to reproduction, the disputes conducted in the educational field also started to be judicialized¹⁸.

18. STF denies appeal which requested the acknowledgement of the right to homeschooling (2018): <https://www.sedep.com.br/noticias/stf-nega-recurso-que-pedia-reconhecimento-de-direito-a-ensino-domiliar> Access: 5 Dec. 2021.

STF considers institutional de law in Alagoas inspired in the School Without Party Movement (2020): <https://oglobo.globo.com/sociedade/stf-julga-inconstitucional-lei-de-alagoas-inspirada-no-movimento-escola-sem-partido-24601475> Access: 5 Dec. 2021.

Still leaning on the neoconservatism of the features and what the distinguished from other moments in our history is the fact that it is built and consolidated in democratic contexts. In this regard, Biroli (2018) argues that in the period of liberalization of political regimes in Latin America, in the 1980s, with the return to party pluralism and freedom of expression, new collective actors could take part in the public scene and among these, conservatives. As examples of this new conservative organization on the public scene, the author points out the role of civil society organizations, political parties, and even civil servants who are guided by religious and conservative principles.

Besides these actors, it is also important to register once more the role of the Catholic Church, which operates at the state level and influences the party system in different ways, affecting this scenario either with the formation of Christian parties or with open access to the statespeople. In this same context, Evangelicals are added to this performance in the political field, investing significantly in the formation of frameworks to dispute and occupy these spaces. As a result, we are witnessing a significant expansion of Christian political representatives, which has impacted the character of our approved laws, public policies, and the State (MENDONÇA, 2017)

Therefore, it is in the face of a context with characteristic elements of liberal democracy, such as electoral processes with a direct vote, the presence of political parties of different spectra, social movements, and civil society organizations, that in Brazil, neoconservatism has been rising. However, this process did not occur in isolation in our country. Actually, according to Biroli et al (2020), this is yet another characteristic of neoconservatism: its transnational character.

Thus, in the last decade in Latin America, we watch campaigns and arguments circulation in the region propagating a common agenda, such as being against the “gender ideology”, in defense of “the right to life” and Family. This idea of transnationality of neo-conservativism is presented in a very explicit way in recent episodes of the continent. Right after the electoral victory of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, in October 2018, the CMHNTM¹⁹ in Argentina announced the organization of its first protest whose agenda would be: “Gender nevermore” (“Género nunca más”). According to Mendonça and Moura (2020), neighbors

¹⁹. The movement *Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas* – CMHNTM (“Don’t mess with my children”, freely translated from Spanish)

such as Bolivia, Paraguay, and Colombia followed this movement. According to the authors, the election of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil facilitated the articulation of a front for joint action in opposition to the policies of gender discussion across the continent.

In Peru, several religious groups reacted to the proposed new curriculum and a march against “gender ideology” was called. A month and a half before the march, congress passed a censure motion against the minister of education preventing the gender approach from being implemented in any school in Peru. The arguments presented, as in Brazil, is that the so-called gender ideologues, radicals, seek that there be no difference between men and women. And they want to do this via education, removing the right of parents to educate their children (MENDONÇA; MOURA, 2020). Once again, we highlight the role of social networks, which were extremely relevant to the mobilization of these groups, such as the use of the hashtag #ConMisHijosNoTeMetas on the networks and in all the demonstrations.

Regarding these movements and the arguments they evoke, we consider it fundamental to point out that in several moments they are presented with scientific language, using relativistic perspectives to name false information, without reliable sources or data, as a possible perspective of an academic approach to these issues. The idea of rights is also very evoked among the arguments used, such as the “right to study contents that the family defends” or “the right to defend that there was no dictatorship in Brazil.” Biroli (2018) claims that it is a strategy to define as “ideological” the movements referenced by ethical pluralism because in this way conservatives can claim science and even democracy.

On the top of this list of particularities about neoliberalism that we are investigating in this article is its relationship with neoliberalism, to have a restorative politics with centrality in the defense of the moral order supposedly in crisis. It is worth saying that the alliance between liberal and conservative shades is not something new in our country. In the History of the Brazilian Republic, we could highlight the strength of anti-communism that by uniting the ideological shades - liberal, Catholic/Christian, and nationalist - became an extremely powerful discursive force, justifying coups to democracy as the ones in 1937 with Getúlio Vargas and in 1964 with the military. (PASSOS, 2017)

However, today we experience a distinct moment, where conservatives act in a so-called democratic scenario, where the defense of moral traditions is

instrumentalized in the political dispute centrally, and neoliberalism becomes anti-liberal and confronts even minimal human and social rights agendas (BIROLI *et al*, 2020). That is, in a scenario strongly marked by neoconservatism there is a refusal of policies for gender equality and opposition to the idea of equal participation of women in society.

For Biroli *et al* (2020), the accelerated dynamic of rights withdrawal goes hand in hand with a bet on a compensatory moralism as a way to politically channel frustrations and to divert attention from the ongoing dismantling. For this project, it is necessary to position the family at the center of its broader conception of society

“Once again, “moral order” and security can be presented as something to be guaranteed by “functional families” that act as managers of individualities increasingly guided by economic rationality, while social bonds are weakened and collective alternatives are delegitimized.” (BIROLI *et al*, 2020, p.90)

Thus, agents with varied ideological profiles and material interests have been coming together in the withdrawal of rights and the moral agenda. Political alliances with groups whose interests are originally distinct are made, uniting non-religious and religious segments to ensure moral hegemony. However, Biroli *et al* (2020) emphasize that despite this plurality of conservative groups with distinct interests, who have been taking over the state machine in Latin countries is the right-wing, which has commonly been developing the practice of ignoring human rights policies and signed international treaties.

In other words, we are working on the idea that conservatism is a positional category, which develops in response or resistance to historical situations of changes in the social and political structure. In this sense, the current configuration of Latin American conservatism is strongly marked by the reaction to the advances of feminist, anti-racist, and LGBTIA+ movements on the continent. One of the central arguments expressed by conservative coalitions in these countries, and very strongly in Brazil, is the panic triggered by the idea of the end of the traditional family. Thus, fear has been a fatal and determining strategy for the neoconservative advance on the continent.

Moral panic is not smokescreen: strategies of neoconservatism

Through the analysis of the current characteristics of conservatism, the neoconservatism, we seek to raise elements that help us understand the Brazilian picture of the advance of censorship and persecution actions, particularly in education. Among the points that we address, one stands out in our research, which is the defense of the family. When we examine the main arguments evoked by the conservative coalition to, among other things, be against, for example, what they call “gender ideology” and LGBTIA+ rights.

Thus, this coalition tries to universalize and naturalize a single conception of family, the heteronormative one. But behind this model presented as a standard, as an institution that is at risk, in danger, and needs to be defended, is the idea of family as a device of control. That is an institution that plays a key role in the current political, economic structure, and social conformation. It is what Biroli (2018a) named as functional family, the one that acts in the support of neoliberal capitalism, which represents the nucleus of security, in the face of vulnerability and precariousness brought with the neoliberal dismantling.

In this way, the author points to the convergence between neoliberalism and neoconservatism. When the crises of care relations - emphatically denounced by feminists - are intensified, social guarantees are withdrawn, public policies are reduced and there are several restrictions on the State's actions, key elements of the neoliberal model, the family becomes the institution that must make reproduction and care work and supply the State's actions. For this to occur, it cannot be fair or democratic, but rather operate on gender inequality, reinforcing the private sphere and the home as a female space, maintaining women's multiple workdays, making domestic work unviable, and highlighting motherhood as destiny.

The family, therefore, assumes a determining role in the conjuncture analyzed by being the link between neoliberalism and neoconservatism, acting as what Birolo *et al* (2020) called symbolic glue, that is, how agents and institutions with diverse interests connect. In this sense, we identify the supposed threat to the heterormative family as a symbolic glue of Brazilian neoconservatism. Thus, discourses, agendas, and actions about the danger to the Brazilian family are propagated. The key to its politics is operated by the moralization of insecurity, brought about by what would be the end of the only institution that takes care of people. As a result, a scenario of insecurity, lack of references, and chaos is created.

Added to this scenario is the use of a political strategy called the rhetoric of loss. This strategy, according to Vital da Cunha (2021), consists of a narrative based on moral insecurity in the face of ongoing social changes. In the face of these changes that point to another normativity, the rhetoric of loss proposes the “rescue” of a sense of socially shared security. In other words, it is the reactions to diversity and to all the transformations that challenge the current social order which has emerged in the form of moral panics and amplified demands for security and the strengthening of identities

“The defense of a family model and a pattern in gender relations are central examples of this narrative. The rhetoric of loss is a narrative that is grounded in the identification of a public sentiment that yearns for change. But not toward the new, not prospective, avant-garde, utopian. The arrow of this desired change goes toward the past. A past, to a large extent, imagined” (VITAL DA CUNHA, 2021).

Thus, the author explains that the rhetoric of loss seeks to placate such feelings of fear, threat, and apathy that have been established and that have weakened interpersonal and inter-institutional trust. This shared feeling of threat on so many levels, in which education stands out, for Vital da Cunha (2021) favors demands for a return to the past. The supposed recovery of values would serve as a basis to reestablish social life, trust, and collective security.

By analyzing, even if briefly, the strategies of neoconservatism, we call attention to the fact that the defense of moral agendas is not just a smokescreen. The *conservative coalition* that is now on the rise in Brazil acts in a way that combines economic, cultural, and moral interests. The 2018 election results and the growing

support for discourses that reinforce the place of the heteronormative family as opposed to diverse forms and experiences of love must be observed with a cry for us to produce more complex conjunctural analyses that understand the economic dimension of social processes, not reduced or restricted to it.

Adriana Facina (2010) in her article entitled “About perfumes and essences: the place of Culture in History” (“*Sobre perfumes e essências: o lugar da Cultura na História*”) points out the concern with the little attention and even devaluation in the Marxist historiographical field with research themes focused on cultural aspects such as music, literature, arts, among others. Seen as “perfumery of history”, these would be less relevant themes for those who understand the economic analysis of the historical-social processes as essential.

Eleven years after the publication of this article we witnessed the conservative coalition coming to power in Brazil through conservative speeches that mobilized popular sectors. What used to be regarded as perfumery becomes increasingly essential for understanding the country’s economic and political situation. As Facina states:

“In the specific historicity of capitalism, driven by the dynamics of class struggle, the “perfumery” of culture can awaken or dull senses and sensibilities, it can be at the service of the transformation or the maintenance of the *status quo*. It is up to historians committed to the transformation of society to sharpen their sense of smell”. (FACINA,2010)

With this article, we seek to invite researchers committed to the transformation of society to sharpen their sense of smell. In general, we are almost exclusively concerned with the analysis of neoliberalism, giving little or almost no attention to neoconservatism. We laugh at its proposals that at galloping pace advance in a society that, without rights, clings to the past that is presented to them in a nostalgic and illusory way. It has never been so necessary to brush history against the grain, as Walter Benjamin (1994) invites us to do.

The ongoing disdemocracy and its impacts on education

What we sought to present in this article was a set of hypotheses and analyses that lead to a process of dismantling Brazilian democracy, a disdemocratization. Persecution and harassment in education, triggered by fear and moral panic, are fundamental to the understanding of this process. Produced and triggered by the convergence between neoliberalism and neoconservatism such movements culminate in an intense withdrawal of rights and dismantling of democracy in Brazil today. In a context where didemocracy grows, the critical and democratic teacher is produced as an enemy.

One of the hypotheses we put forward was that the moral disputes around the defense of the family and the attacks on pro-gender equality policies are a structural part of a process of disdemocratization in our country. This means that for us there is an erosion of our democratic regime being implemented through the actions of the conservative coalition and its ability to mobilize via the moral agenda.

Many recent studies on disdemocratization focus on the weakening of social norms and previously reliable institutions, seeking to identify how solid democracies have been affected by this phenomenon. In the case of Brazil, it is fundamental to highlight exactly the fragility of our regime, permeated in its history by democratic interregnums, marked by innumerable coups, and by historically corrupt institutions. In our opinion, this situation makes the ongoing disdemocracy even worse.

Another important factor to be mentioned is brought by Biroli *et al* (2020), when she highlights that “modern authoritarianism” does not necessarily leave aside electoral processes, but rather invests in disarticulating the opposition without annihilating it. The idea of supposed moral majorities is defended and also puts the sense of democracy in check. Added to this scenario of weakening and disengagement from democracy are the scandals of economic power and corruption.

Moreover, the process of democracy erosion is linked to the deconstruction of the notion of public, of collectivity. This happens through privatization in multiple aspects and also in the redefinition of the very sense of collectivity. All this, as part of a neoliberal regime in which the expansion of the economy occurs to detriment of the social, in which the private sphere corresponds to a “protected personal sphere” and the notion of public is deteriorated.

On this point, Biroli *et al* (2020) point out that there are different types of privatization, both of goods and of the public space, which corresponds to the restriction of the role of the State, and also the expansion of the “protected private sphere,” the latter referring to the expansion of the role of the functional family. Therefore, the defense of this family model also corresponds to the defense of the neoliberal and private logic. And it, as we have tried to expose throughout the text, has been an element that triggers moral panic and persecution.

“The relationship between “disdemocratization,” precarization, and the mobilization of “moral panics” for political purposes still needs to be better researched. This is not a grand conspiracy, but movements that converge and set new standards for the selectivity of existing democracies. The insecurities thus generated also function as an active source of legitimacy for repressive policies and militarization”. (BIROLI, 2018.p. 90)

We seek to demonstrate that this relationship between moral panic, neoconservatism, and de-democratization has been taking shape in Brazil through the focus on the family and slogans such as “my children my rules”. In this context, we witness the demonization of teachers who, by practicing a democratic education, are critical to the ongoing disdemocracy.

Accused of being indoctrinators, teachers have survived in a Brazilian scenario in which there is a political construction with manipulation of affection. Families are incited to hate and attack education professionals because they are threatening the security of their values and rights; meanwhile, basic rights such as access to health, education, and housing are collapsing along with Brazilian democracy.

If neo-conservatism says that the teacher is the enemy, it forgot to add that the teacher who believes in democratic education is the enemy of the ongoing democracy and, for this reason, will continue to be the resistance.

REFERENCES

- APPLE, Michael W. Produzindo diferença: neoliberalismo, neoconservadorismo e a política de reforma educacional. *Linhas Críticas*, Brasília, DF, n.46, p. 606-644, set./dez. 2015.
- APPLE, Michael W. Reestruturação Educativa e Curricular e as Agendas Neoliberal e Neoconservadora: Entrevista com Michael Apple. *Currículo sem Fronteiras*, v.1, n.1, pp.5-33, Jan/Jun 200.
- APPLE, Michael W. O discurso da “qualidade” como nova retórica conservadora no campo educacional *in* Pablo A. A. Gentili & Tomaz Tadeu da Silva. *Neoliberalismo, qualidade total e educação*. Editora Vozes. 1994.
- BENJAMIN, Walter. Magia e técnica, arte e política: ensaios sobre literatura e história da cultura. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1994. – Obras escolhidas volume 1.
- BIROLI, Flávia; MACHADO, Maria das Dores Campos; VAGGIONE, Juan Marco. Gênero, neoconservadorismo e democracia. Disputas e retrocessos na América Latina. Boitempo. São Paulo, 2020.
- BIROLI, Flávia. Reação conservadora, democracia e conhecimento. *Revista De Antropologia*, 2018a, 83-94.
- BIROLI, Flávia. Gênero e Desigualdades: os limites da democracia no Brasil. São Paulo, Boitempo, 2018.
- BRASIL. Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira (Inep). Censo da Educação Básica. 2020: resumo técnico. Brasília, DF: INEP, 2021. Available at: https://download.inep.gov.br/publicacoes/institucionais/estatisticas_e_indicadores/resumo_tecnico_censo_escolar_2020.pdf
- DUARTE, A. Educação ou Ideologias. Arquidiocese de São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro. March 2014. Available at: <http://arqrio.org/formacao/detalhes/381/educacao-ou-ideologias>.

“ESCOLA SEM PARTIDO — educação sem doutrinação”. [S.l.], 2014-2017. Available at: <http://escolasempartido.org/>

FACINA, Adriana. Sobre perfumes e essências: o lugar da Cultura na História. *Tempo Brasileiro*, v. 180, p. 73-88, 2010.

MENDONÇA, Amanda. Estado, religião e democracia: reflexões a partir dos debates sobre “ideologia de gênero” no Plano Nacional de Educação. Tese de Doutorado em Política Social. Universidade Federal Fluminense, UFF, Brasil. 2017.

MENDONÇA, Amanda. Projetos para Educação brasileira: da retórica conservadora ao pânico moral. *Revista Communitas*, Volume 2, Número Especial, Páginas 106-120, 25 nov. 2018.

MENDONÇA, Amanda; MOURA, Fernanda. “Meus filhos, minhas regras”: gênero, religião e política na América Latina. *Labirinto* (UNIR), v. 32, p. 93-110, 2020.

PASSOS, Pâmella. Vozes a favor do golpe! O discurso anticomunista do Ipês como materialidade de um projeto de classes. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Mórula, 2017.

_____ ; GUIGUES, Luciana. Como ensinar História em tempos de avanço conservador? Conversas com estudantes de Licenciatura do Rio de Janeiro. *Revista Fronteiras & Debates*. Macapá, Volume 7, Número 2, 2020.

PENNA, Fernando. O ódio aos professores. In: Ação Educativa Assessoria, Pesquisa e Informação (Org.). A Ideologia do Movimento Escola Sem Partido. São Paulo: Ação Educativa, 2016.

_____. O Escola sem Partido como chave de leitura do fenômeno educacional. In: FRIGOTTO, Gaudêncio (Org.). Escola “sem” partido: esfinge que ameaça a educação e a sociedade brasileira. Rio de Janeiro: UERJ/LPP, 2017.

SILVA, M. C.; MENDES, O. M. As marcas do machismo no cotidiano escolar. Uberlândia – MG: Jun. 2015. (Caderno Espaço Feminino – v. 28), p. 90-99. Available at: <https://biblat.unam.mx/pt/revista/caderno-espaco-feminino/2>.

VITAL DA CUNHA, C. (2021). Retórica da Perda nas eleições presidenciais brasileiras em 2018: religião, medos sociais e tradição em foco. *Plural. Antropologías Desde América Latina Y Del Caribe*, Available at: <https://asociacionlatino-americanadeantropologia.net/revistas/index.php/plural/article/view/153>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

PÂMELLA PASSOS is a teacher at the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio de Janeiro (IFRJ). She has a post-doctoral internship in the Graduate Program of Education at the Universidade Federal Fluminense (2021) and also a post-doctoral internship in the Graduate Program of Social Anthropology/National Museum/Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (2016). Doctor in Social History from the Federal Fluminense University and Master in History, with concentration area in Political History, from the State University of Rio de Janeiro. She is deputy leader of the Research Group on Technology Education and Culture (GPTEC) and is currently coordinating the research “Educators are defenders”, a feasibility study for the creation of a host program for teachers at risk in Brazil.

E-mail: pamella.passos@ifrj.edu.br

AMANDA MENDONÇA holds a doctorate in Social Policy from the Federal Fluminense University and a post-doctoral internship in the Graduate Program of Education at the Federal Fluminense University (2021). Master's in education from the Postgraduate Program of Education - PPGE / UFRJ and specialist in gender and sexuality from UERJ. She is a member of the Observatory of Secularism on Education and is also an associated researcher of the research group Technology, Education and Culture (GPTEC) and of the University of Dundee. Currently, she is the General Research Assistant of the study “Educators are defenders” a feasibility study for the creation of a host program for teachers at risk in Brazil.

E-MAIL: amandademendonca@gmail.com



São as editoras independentes que garantem
que títulos como esse cheguem até você.
Ajude a **mórula** a continuar esse trabalho.
Adquira nossos livros:

www.morula.com.br

 **mórula**
EDITORIAL



Grupo de Pesquisa em Tecnologia, Educação & Cultura



INSTITUTO FEDERAL
DE EDUCAÇÃO, CIÉNCIA E TECNOLOGIA
Rio de Janeiro