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Curriculum and childhood: how have we welcomed newcomers to the world?

Currículo e infância: como temos recebido os recém-chegados ao mundo?

Currículo e infancia: ¿cómo hemos acogido a los recién llegados al mundo?

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Abstract

This article seeks to discuss the curriculum in the educational field in its connections with childhood. It takes Arendt's idea of the relationship between birth rate and world renewal to think about the ways we welcome children into school today. It problematizes the modes of production of contemporary childhood in schools, which increasingly focus on occupying children's time and offering them little of the world, impoverishing their experiences. Therefore, it dares to conjecture a curriculum that produces more dignified times, spaces and relationships for children. In an initial discussion, it analyzes the reception of newcomers to the world, thinking about the meanings and beauties offered to children today, through the curriculum. It continues by discussing the possibility of a curriculum that aims to lead without guiding and ends the discussion with a question about the curriculum: would this be a mode of production or an invitation?

Keywords: Curriculum. Childhood. Invitation. Transmission.

Resumo

Este artigo busca discutir o currículo no campo educacional em suas articulações com a infância. Toma a ideia arendtiana da relação entre natalidade e renovação de mundo para pensar nos modos como estamos recebendo as crianças na escola hoje. Problematiza os modos de produção da infância contemporânea na escola, que se voltam, cada vez mais, a ocupar o tempo das crianças e pouco lhes oferecem de mundo, empobrecendo suas experiências. Por isso, ousa conjecturar um currículo que produza tempos, espaços e relações mais dignas para as crianças. Numa discussão inicial, analisa o recebimento dos recém-chegados ao mundo, pensando sobre os sentidos e as belezas oferecidas à infância hoje, por meio do currículo. Segue discorrendo sobre a possibilidade de um currículo que se propõe a conduzir sem guiar e encerra a discussão com uma pergunta sobre o currículo: seria este um modo de produção ou um convite?

Palavras-chave: *Currículo. Infância. Convite. Transmissão.*

Resumen

Este artículo busca discutir el currículo en el ámbito educativo en sus vínculos con la infancia. Toma la idea de Arendt sobre la relación entre el nacimiento y la renovación del mundo para reflexionar sobre las maneras en que recibimos a los niños en la escuela hoy. Problematiza los modos de producción de la infancia contemporánea en la escuela, que se centran cada vez más en ocupar el tiempo de los niños y ofrecerles poco del mundo, empobreciendo sus experiencias. Por lo tanto, se atreve a conjeturar un currículo que produzca tiempos, espacios y relaciones más dignos para los niños. En una discusión inicial, analiza la recepción de los recién llegados al mundo, reflexionando sobre los significados y las bellezas que ofrece el currículo a la infancia actual. Continúa discutiendo la posibilidad de un currículo que busque liderar sin guiar y concluye la discusión con una pregunta sobre el currículo: ¿es este un modo de producción o una invitación?

Palabras clave*: Currículo. Infancia. Invitación. Transmisión.*

1. The curriculum as a *reservoir of meaning* offered to children

> [...] Along the way, whatever the culture in which they were born, humans thirst for beauty, for meaning, for thought, for belonging. They need symbolic figurations to escape the chaos. And we wonder what was the magic trick capable of reducing literature and art to rich people's frivolities, or libraries to simple places of "access to information". They are also reservoirs of meanings in which we find scientific metaphors that give order to the world around us and literary and artistic metaphors born from the slow and collected work of writers or artists who have carried out a work of transfiguration of their own trials. Its works nourish dreams, thoughts, desires, conversations about life, always caressing the "huge and unknown animals" that sometimes mysteriously pass near us, even if we have not been shipwrecked in the Caribbean Sea (Petit, 2019, p. 36, our translation).

"Can I have your word?": this is the question that artist Elida Tessler (2012, 2020) has been asking over the last twenty years. A simple question that takes someone else's word in hand. Elida's work is a *work in process,* started in 2004, in which, in the uniqueness of the encounter, the word is taken in hand. The words originate from encounters with the following invitation: *can I have your word?*, in which the word is asked "[...] as an initial procedure [...], requesting that it be written on a clothespin, in the interlocutor's mother tongue" (Tessler, 2012, p. 201, our translation). "Your word" is an opening of senses and meanings for each reader, when the work on display is a flash "[...] where a simple gesture becomes an act of creation." It is a work that is in permanent conversation with what is lived, "[...] everything is pulsating, like words from a text that is not yet written" (Tessler, 2020, p. 09, our translation).

This invitation makes us think about taking the word in hand and looking at it more closely in the daily work with childhoods. If the artist asked us for a word, it would possibly be "receiving." What we would like to propose to write here is about how we welcome children into kindergartens today, thinking about how we constitute and practice an idea of the concept of *receiving*. Gonçalo Tavares (2015), in a book called "Short Movies," creates a set of scenes and narrations that make us think, that seek to create, inside our heads, very short films, like moving memories. The word has this power: that of creating images. The image we have about who receives something or someone, usually reveals a behavior for such: to prepare, plan, wait. When we receive someone, we have the habit of showing them the best that we have or do. This is because the idea of newness that the subject to be received transmits, perhaps makes us revisit our own ability to start over—precisely the one that is reiterated by childhood: of amazement, novelty, seeing something for the first time.

The child is, in itself, the novelty and carries the concept of beginning. Therefore, their arrival at school needs to validate the strength that such a movement means. For this reason, we try to think about how we can make this arrival a "celebration," according to López (2018, p. 10), in which "[...] each child is extraordinary in its unique capacity, at the same time that it is the heir of previous generations, with it a new possibility is born, a new reading, a new world." In this way, we dare, in this text, to problematize an idea of curriculum that poses itself to think about the reception of children by those who are already here, in the world, that is, us, adults, proposing an approximation between the ideas of transmission, invitation, curriculum, tradition. For this end, we borrow the ideas of Michèle Petit (2019), Hannah Arendt (2016), Maria Emília Lopez (2018), Pereira (2002), Deise Gessinger (2022), Michel Foucault (2010), Alfredo Veiga-Neto (2009, 2004), Christian Laval (2004), bell hooks (2017), Han (2015), Nikolas Rose (1999), among others.

Hannah Arendt (2016) is one of the authors who inaugurates the connection of the child to the new, explaining that births are indications of new beginnings for humanity, opportunities for generations to integrate, renew themselves, and establish meaning for the world. She understands that the education of children is related to the love we have for the world: we love the world in which we live, in such a way that we want to perpetuate this love, this world and our existence. We have the possibility to do this through children. Aside from the nostalgia that the word *love* carries, we reiterate that the love defended by Arendt and cited here has to do with commitment. We can think that this word, for bell hooks (2021), has the sense of collective, political, and incorporates an existential ethics, an

action that is built, created. With this, we also understand that a curriculum that receives children in children's schools, from a very early age, is committed to them and to the world.

In Arendt's wake, Larrosa (2006, p. 187, our translation) states that "[...] birth lies within a double temporality: on the one hand, [...] it constitutes the beginning of a chronology that the child will have to follow along the path of their development [...]; on the other hand, birth constitutes an episode in the continuity of the history of the world." This double temporality to which Larrosa refers, spurs us to think about the curriculum as a continuous movement, but one that does not despise tradition, that which was historically and socially produced by humanity, because the world pre-exists at each birth. As Arendt (2016, p. 243, our translation) argues:

> [...] Precisely for the benefit of what is new and revolutionary in each child, education must be conservative; it must preserve this novelty and introduce it as something new in an old world, which, however revolutionary it may be in its actions, is always, from the point of view of the next generation, obsolete and close to destruction.

In this sense, Georges Didi-Huberman (2021, p. 117, our translation) comments that we do not start from nothing or from a single place. For this author, we are always on the move to start over, "[...] we start from a whirlpool if it is a river, from a crossroads if it is a road. The real question would be: *how to start over?* And no longer: *where to start?"*. The author will tell us that starting over depends on our way of situating ourselves in time. Marília Garcia (2025, p. 11, our translation, emphasis added) also comments that a "[...] beginning is an encounter" and tells us that "[...] to start is to extend your arms and make a gesture with your hands: *let's go?* To begin is to choose a word that will invent a world." When we receive a small child, we are making this gesture of saying with our hands "let's go?", a loving gesture, to remember bell hooks and Paulo Freire. How can we think, in this manner, of a curriculum that welcomes, that receives, as those who say "*let's go*," as those who ask themselves, "how to start over?"

In this context, we see today the birth of children who lack what Petit (2019, p. 36, our translation) points out in the epigraph, when talking about a "[...] thirst for beauty, meaning, thought, and belonging" and, possibly, something that makes once more a new beginning, a return once again to the production of dreams and desires. Petit (2019) leads us to think about when and how children have had access to the "reservoirs of meanings" today. Where and who presents to them the cultural heritage of humanity? Who makes this gesture of welcome, of receiving as if to say "let's go?" In times of standardized curricula through booklets and textbooks for children from zero to six years old; of ready-made activities on *Pinterest* and plans available for sale to teachers; of school schedule grids, in which the child has more than 10 specialized classes in a week; of imposition of happiness as a daily rule, in which the feelings themselves have already become a commodity, being marketed by the logic of "socioemotional education," among so many other symptoms that unfold in contemporary children's schools, we bring here some questions that propose to analyze how much quality a pedagogical action can have within a curriculum like this. Or rather, how much of the world is it possible to contemplate amid this overload?

In this text, we speak of this action that we named as pedagogical, referring to what reiterates what a teacher and their group of children, or rather, a group of children and their teacher produce in a school time-space. We understand the action as a gesture of affection, care, attention, study and commitment to newcomers. A gesture that produces desire. We take the pedagogical action as this invitation to the world, just like the invitation made by Elida. A concrete gesture of an outstretched hand that seeks to find other hands thirsty for touch.

However, when dealing with curriculum, it is necessary to situate in the present time-space and specify this curriculum that we talk about in the aforementioned times. In this curriculum, then, the pedagogical action becomes an emptying of the thirst of those who arrive with a restless and curious look. It also distances the hands from the touch and refuses the countless possible invitations. A curriculum, as we have today, leads to performance and competition for *rankings*.

But it is this thirst that we want to use to think collectively about "how to start over?" Perhaps it is time to ask ourselves how a curriculum can offer children a more dignified arrival in the world and thus a more dignified life to live.

Maybe it is time to ask ourselves “how to start over?” followed by a “let's go,” in a possible affirmation of a pedagogical gesture that rethinks its actions and processes, as a gesture of loving care, which leads to “wandering the gaze” (Larrosa, 2006, p. 50), so that other ways of thinking, perceiving, and living can be (re)invented.

In this text, we dare to think that, perhaps, a certain transmission is needed, that is, those who are already in the world may need to commit to those who are arriving. To talk about this transmission, as a proposition of new beginnings, we talk about the ideas of Gessinger (2022), Arendt (2016), and Pereira (2002): a transmission that puts us in a human relationship, that makes us human. We did not come from thin air and neither did we come alone. Our birth, which marks our beginning, is embraced by someone who has gone through different types of transmission, someone who has transmitted a little of themselves so that our creation could take place. In this way, we are beings born through transmission and constitute ourselves in the continuity of what they transmit to us and what we transmit to others. However, as Larrosa (2006, p. 187, our translation) points out, “[...] while a child is born, something else appears in our midst. And it is 'other' because it is always something else and not the materialization of a project, the satisfaction of a necessity, the fulfillment of a desire, the fulfillment of something lacking, or the repair of a loss,” because we cannot predict what they will do with the world we are delivering to them. In this sense, the child “[...] is other as other, not as what we put in him. It is other, because it is always something else than what we can anticipate, because it is always far beyond what we know or what we want or what we expect” (Larrosa, 2006, p. 187, our translation). Hence the renewal of the world to which Arendt (2016) refers, which occurs by birth.

Rita Ribes Pereira (2002), in her text titled "Everything at the same time and now," makes the question pulsate for the place of this transmission in the face of the life we have today. In this text, the author narrates the trajectory of a contemporary childhood experience, questioning herself about what we are doing today, when, for example, we value what is new over what is old. In the educational field, innovation has been pointed out as the great solution to their problems. This “[...] novelty eagerness of non-traditional pedagogical practices,” as Julio Groppa Aquino (2017, p. 286, our translation) argues, comes “[...] wrapped by the mantra of the renewal of the affairs of this world and, *mutatis mutandis*, of absolute contempt for it, since its spokespersons are apathetic to establish vigorous connections between the dead of the works and the living of the classrooms.” As Pereira (2002, p. 165, our translation) comments,

> [...] the relationship between tradition and the new is then placed on new bases, not only with regard to the production/consumption of goods and services, but in the very existence of temporality, the search for the eternally new as a metaphor for a subject who refuses to age, accumulated experience as a source of shame, memory as an impersonal element.

It is possible to find, in Pereira's words, some “[...] magic tricks capable of reducing literature and art to rich people's frivolities, or libraries to simple places of ‘access to information’” (Petit, 2019, p. 36, our translation), because perhaps the instant relationships that guide our lives have occupied the time and space of the meaning that human transmission has in itself. We can, perhaps, dialogue with Tiago Almeida (2024, p. 49, our translation), when he comments on “[...] the role that childhood education plays in the formation of children's subjectivities, in their introduction to social norms and values and in their development and learning,” thinking that this introduction, these initial rites, displace a transmission time that ends up suspending the transmission experience itself, becoming a bureaucratic way—or as Edson Sousa (2007) comments, a bureaucratization of tomorrow—of thinking about the modes of existence.

López (2018, p. 20) brings the construction of the conception of culture as a “mass culture.” The author questions the hegemonic modes of production of subjectivation that we have been living and in which children are, discussing the impact of this, such as, for example, in the construction of stereotypes. Children are immersed in consumption, which regards them incapable, innocent, and unthinking and shapes ways of being a person/child—exclusionary, sexist, homophobic, racist ways; ways that have caused illness. After all, when a child, in their process of growth, development, and subjectification, does not find a welcoming and safe means to invent themselves—to

experiment, learn, test, make mistakes, live—, it is possible that they produce illnesses as a way of life—a possible life. Hence the importance of the school and, especially, the teacher. About this, Larrosa (2006, p. 51, our translation) comments that a "[...] beautiful image for a teacher" is that of "someone who leads someone to themselves. It is also a beautiful image for someone who learns: [...] someone who, when reading with an open heart, turns to themselves, finds their own form, their own way " (Larrosa, 2006, p. 51, our translation). And when we talk about reading, we refer to the reading of the world envisaged by Freire (1987).

But here we understand that the school, as a public space for the production of knowledge, relationships, and promotion of life, 'of invitations' beyond being this space that receives newcomers, also holds the responsibility of showing this world to everyone, as it presents itself, with its idiosyncrasies and paradoxes. In this sense and from the Arendtian perspective, education and school are committed to presenting the world to newcomers, to the new generations, so as not to leave them "[...] to themselves, so as not to take away from them the possibility of doing something new, something we had not foreseen, in order to, instead, prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world" (Arendt, 2016, p. 247, our translation), as we argue in this article.

So, one of the first accesses that a child has to the entire historical-cultural heritage is (or should be) made by the curriculum. The meanings, as stated by Petit (2019), to which children have access, through play, art, reading, "[...] in addition to the expansion of the universe of family practices that spontaneously accompany children since their arrival," as López (2018, p. 16, our translation) adds, are an inseparable part of this curriculum in this first stage of everyone's life.

This curriculum, which we conjecture as a transmission, or a daily restart in pedagogical gestures in the classroom, highlights (or should) another possible childhood time. Walter Kohan and Rosane Fernandes (2020, n.p., our translation) tell us about the multiple facets of the "[...] space-time of childhood as a constitutive element of the very idea of democracy, that is, to think about the relations between childhood and politics." A defense of other ways of thinking about pedagogical practice—and with it the transmission, the restart and the curriculum—necessarily involves this action of new temporalities in educational practice that are political. What we mean by this is that "[...] there is a political value in children's temporality, which requires attention and care, much more than interrupting, as educational institutions currently do" (Kohan; Fernandes, 2020, n.p., out translation).

This movement of thinking politically is, in a way, thinking about what forms of transmission we are operating in the daily life of the classroom. Tiago Almeida (2024, p. 60, our translation) tells us about an education of becoming, saying that "[...] early childhood education can also be a space of resistance and subversion, in which children can experiment and build new forms of subjectivities." Thus, the ways of understanding the political involve restarting and rethinking pedagogical actions and their temporalities within educational institutions.

2. Lead without guiding

The task we project here, therefore, is to think about the ways and means of leading these newcomers, without guiding them, and this implies, in López's view (2018, p. 22, our translation), putting "[...] a broad look at our own practices and an effort to repeatedly review any sign of ethnocentrism." One of the premises pointed out by the author for this is empathy, that is: "[...] an availability. A thought about the new subjective modalities that can be challenged since childhood" (López, 2018, p. 29, our translation). An opening to the reservoirs of meanings, as observed by Petit (2019), through which children can find and produce new sensations of the world, new *becomings*.

This premise is linked to the commitment of the transmission belonging to the adult, which we can qualify as necessary for children. In times of disrespect and lack of bond between adults and children, investing in forces for meaning seems necessary to us when we are operating with the concept of a dignified life. We understand this concept through Judith Butler who, in *Frames of War* (*Quadros de Guerra*) (2015), invites us to think about which lives are

susceptible to mourning and for which lives we must fight. We borrow this concept to think about a curriculum that produces more dignified times, spaces, and relationships for children.

We start with the understanding of an adult who is presence and is present, who listens, pays attention, plays, knows, and, therefore, has a bond with the child. It is with this premise that we defend a curriculum permeated by the politicality of pedagogical practice, wrapped in a space-time packed with empathy and transmission exercised by a committed, involved, affected, available adult, who gives the child security, space, and time for them to have access and promote cultural interventions in their environment, because the child "[...] requires special care and protection so that nothing destructive happens to them from the world. But the world also needs protection, so that it is not overthrown and destroyed by the harassment of the new that erupts on it with each new generation" (Arendt, 2016, p. 235, our translation).

With Gessinger (2022), we think about how we understand transmission and how we operate with it in schools, problematizing the way it is taken by an entire common-sense discursive regime that considers it as "the evil of education," in the same way that educational constructivist thinking taught us at least two decades ago. For the author, "[...] we are experiencing the effects of the erasure of the transmission of tradition, narrative, and memory, and it is very necessary, if not urgent, to think about other ways of dealing with transmission today" (Gessinger, 2022, p. 26, our translation). Based on this statement, we emphasize the importance of listing in the curriculum its political commitment, which goes beyond thinking about transmission for good or evil, but making it a motto to use its power.

Another perspective that still speaks of a form of affiliation is that of transmission as a way of dealing with the past, with tradition. Transmission as a desire for affiliation of a style refers to "[...] the transmission of marks of desire, the transmission of an inheritance, of an affiliation, of a name" (Almeida, 2024, s. p., our translation). It is from an ethical position that the one who teaches transmits a style, a way, a manner of thinking and existing, which means summoning the other to occupy a place that is crossed by experience and is willing to conquer their part in this heritage, manifesting a desire that is not anonymous, but that is a desire in action, a desire in words (Gessinger, 2022).

This means that this transmission is not about teaching, about something that we, as adults, show or teach children, because it is not about 'guiding.' But with the support of a desire that affects the child, precisely because of the love for the world and for the child, as a newcomer, that we carry. An invitation to the beauty of the world that produces desire. Thus, transmission is creation and re-creation, because, to the same extent that we give something, we are willing to receive, with the same openness and welcome with which we receive. Thus, it is possible for something to arise in this exchange, something unprecedented, unexpected, unusual. From this perspective, we could say that we transmit a little of who we are. Therefore, transmission is part of this curriculum that welcomes children into the world, and the teacher has the task of presenting it to children. It is from this that

> [...] their authority and responsibility emerge. Authority concerns not an exercise of power, but the meaning that inaugurates its task: something with authority says something, means, opens way for a meaning, speaks, gives life, increases the world, takes care of it: from the act of a teacher, the world receives another meaning for the student. From there, pedagogical responsibility is born: putting something of the world on the table, offering it to students requires taking the responsibility for that which is offered to them as an object of study (Kohan, 2017, p. 597, our translation).

Covering the ideas defended so far, which talk about the way children have been supplied through the curriculum, how they have understood and dealt with the collective life that the school represents, we think it is essential, inspired by the Foucauldian perspective, to ask ourselves not only about the way we receive childhood through the curriculum, but also: *what has this method produced and done to us?*

3. Curriculum: a mode of production or an invitation?

The word curriculum has its etymological origins in the Latin verb *currere*, whose meaning leads to the idea of movement, trajectory, and path. This etymological origin mainly evokes "[...] two ideas: the course (as continuity) and the stage (as part of a continuum). Curriculum, therefore, is related to a process or path, which takes place in time, in subsequent moments" (Rocha, 2000, p. 18, our translation). Luis Castello and Claudia Mársico (2007, p. 85, our translation) point out that "[...] *curriculum* is, in Latin, the diminutive of *currus* and alludes both to a 'race' and to what is used for the race, that is, 'the car.' The semantic field of the term is very concrete, it refers to combat and, by extension, to the games that ultimately simulate it." Thus, keeping the temporal distances that separate us from our origin, the idea of path remains, when we think of school curriculum in the present time.

Although our purpose here is not to trace a genealogy of the curriculum, it seems necessary to go back a little in time to understand how this idea of spatio-temporal ordering is forged "[...] of what and how to teach and learn" (Veiga-Neto, 2009, p. 32, our translation). This *school artifact* that, as Veiga-Neto (2009, p. 32, our translation) points out, "[...] functions as a device that teaches us certain ways of perceiving, signifying and using space. In addition, the curriculum teaches us to articulate space with time" and has its emergence in Modernity.

The conception of Modernity to which we refer regards a period marked by a set of intense and profound changes that take place in the political, social, economic, and technological spheres, which occurred in the Western world "[...] after the crisis of the feudal system (soil depletion; peasant revolts; impoverishment of a large portion of the population; epidemics; wars)" (Campesato, 2021, p. 104, our translation). In these changes, the "[...] thought that humans have about themselves and the world" becomes central (Campesato, 2021, p. 104, our translation). A world whose medieval spiritual thought was no longer able to explain.

To this end, it was imperative to create "[...] a new order for the world," as Michel Foucault well showed in his studies, "[...] perhaps even more than inventing a new order, what happened was the emergence of a new way of thinking about order, of thinking about what it means to order and how the ordering of things should take place" (Veiga-Neto, 2004, p. 71, our translation). Thus, education, school and all its machinery constitute a crucial element capable of organizing the diversity of ways of thinking and existing in the midst of a turbulence of transformations, in which discipline becomes central. Discipline is understood here in its double dimension: that of knowledge and that of bodies, in which the operations of selection, normalization, hierarchization, and centralization integrate disciplinary power (Foucault, 2005).

From these brief notes, we dare to envisage other ways of thinking about the school curriculum beyond the ordering and hierarchization of bodies and knowledge in time and space, fixed orders, normative identities, and systematized contents (Paraíso, 2009). We refer to fissures through which displacements, contagions, and reinventions emerge. In these gaps, the subversion of instituted logics and the creation of unique ways of life become possible, because "[...] a curriculum is an artifact with many possibilities of dialogue with life; with several possibilities of ways of life, of peoples and their desires [...]. After all, even though it is a disciplinary space, by excellence, many things can happen in a curriculum" (Paraíso, 2009, p. 278, our translation).

We borrow the question made by Correa, Sampaio, and Borja (2023, p. 1158, our translation): "[...] how to open cracks in the concrete of the school curriculum to give way to micropolitics that allow us to enhance experiences [...]?" By exploring articulations "[...] between plants, art, and education through workshops with students of the 2nd year of high school of a public school in Niterói-RJ", in Biology classes, Correa, Sampaio, and Borja (2023, p. 1150) cause displacements in the curricular field, promoting other and new affections, ways of thinking and existing that include new relationships between humans and non-humans. Through the project developed, it was possible "[...] to reflect on the narratives that this meeting can raise and how these *intertwinings* provide curricular creations" (Correa; Sampaio; Borja, 2023, p. 1150, our translation). This experience presents itself as a possibility of resistance to the standardized, prescriptive, performative curriculum aimed at measurable results, immersed in a neoliberal rationality.

In this logic, to reflect on what a curriculum can produce and through which we are produced in our present, it is necessary to dwell on the symptoms of our time. We need to think about how life has been taken over by the demands of speed, performance, production, acceleration, and the incessant search for what is better, more interesting, more recent, more, more, and more. The philosophy of difference names these issues as symptoms of this time, symptoms of contemporary neoliberalism. Authors such as Veiga-Neto, Laval, hooks, Han, and Rose corroborate this idea, posing important questions when researching education in the present. Thus, we are interested in placing neoliberalism from an educational perspective, understanding that this dialogue is urgent and necessary.

> [...] The existence of Mickey Mouse is such a dream for contemporary man. It is an existence full of miracles, which not only surpass technical miracles, but mock them. For the most extraordinary thing is that everyone, without any machinery, makes an impromptu exit from the body of Mickey Mouse, his allies and pursuers, from the most ordinary furniture, as well as from trees, clouds, and lakes. Nature and technique, primitiveness and comfort are completely unified here, and, in the eyes of the people, fatigued by the infinite complications of daily life and who see the purpose of life only as the remotest vanishing point in an endless perspective of means, a redemptive existence arises that in each difficulty is enough in itself, in the simplest and, at the same time, most comfortable way, in which an automobile weighs no more than a straw hat, and a fruit on the tree rounds itself like a balloon (Benjamin, 2012, p. 128, our translation).

Walter Benjamin (2012) helps us think about the basic Nietzschean question of what we are making of ourselves. In translation for the writing we do here, we are interested in thinking: *what are we doing with the lives of children in early childhood schools?* Or *what is the curriculum doing to children from a very early age? What have children been doing with their lives in early childhood education with what we offer them?*

Veiga-Neto (2011, n.p., our translation), in an interview with the Humanitas Institute, states that "[...] the neoliberal model does not interest education." The author explains that education, in a neoliberal perspective, is seen by the lexicon of production, profit generation, and production of indebted subjects at various levels of life; therefore, the type of education that discusses and proposes to think with philosophy does not serve the neoliberal logic. The author says: "[...] neoliberalism situates education in the market of competition, of exacerbated production." (Veiga-Neto, 2011, n.p., our translation). Thus, we understand that the logic of acceleration and production crosses the school with explicit interests and purposes: as if the school were at the service of this (re)production.

Nikolas Rose (1999, p. 43, our translation) explains that the subjects of this time need to "[...] regulate themselves," as we do not experience this regulation through the practices of pain in the flesh, punishments, and violence. Regulation shifts from our own subjectivation, which has been shaped by speed, performance, indebtedness, the need to please, but also by male chauvinism, racism, etc.

This is because "[...] the individual is no longer, as far as authorities are concerned, merely the possessor of physical capacities to be organized and dominated through the inculcation of moral standards and behavioral habits" (Rose, 1999, p. 43, our translation), as it had been in the Middle Ages and in modernity. In summary, we can say, borrowing the words of Dardot, Gueden, and Laval (2021, p. 12, our translation) that "[...] perhaps we can say that the great novelty of neoliberal rationality is to create the individual who produces, controls, and watches, indebted and violent to themselves." We have seen what is happening to the Yanomami peoples in Brazil, and we have done nothing; no one shows the barbarity in the news of the so-called "mainstream media," few seek (or are interested in) those responsible for these catastrophes. A 12-year-old girl was killed after being raped by gold miners. A child. Killed. Raped to death. Even so, we are not shocked, we don't mobilize as a group, we don't act. We are violating ourselves, either by the death of the other or by our own, which begins when nothing else affects us, when nothing else touches us and when we find ourselves just like the men who returned from the war, as Benjamin (2012) narrated in 1940, shortly before his suicide. A "[...] death in life" (Freire, 1987, p. 99, our translation).

For Rose (1999, p. 45, our translation), "[...] contemporary government operates by subtly and thoroughly infiltrating the ambitions of the regulatory process within our very existence and experience as subjects." If we think

within the field of Education and, even more specifically, in early childhood education, it is necessary to describe the ways in which neoliberal rationality operates to take our lives in schools. We explain it: because it is an extremely subtle and effective guidance of conduct, as Foucault (2010) taught us, neoliberalism captures and forges modes of subjectivation, passing through our flesh, our guts, our soul.

What we see today in most curricula for children is: acceleration and praise for overproduction, consumption, and competition with oneself and others; such a lack of transmission, that we no longer have a way to measure the event around us. We can no longer live an experience, such as thinking, because we reproduce what (re)produces us, without knowing what it is and where it comes from. We emphasize that it is not a matter of knowing or searching for a truth, because, through Foucault (2010), we understand that it does not exist in itself. It addresses thinking about the things and events of this world, asking ourselves *why* and *how*, spurring us to think outside the paralyzed acceptance, of contemporary slavery, as problematized by Schuler (2021, p. 45, our translation):

> [...] Perhaps, one of the modes of slavery of our present is the spectacularized *stultitia* in which we live, in which everything takes place at a super speed, in which few brands remain and make an abode, in which students become customers who need to be pleased with their individual interests, and teachers are asked to transform themselves into performers (of marketing, not the arts) to have the attention of increasingly inattentive and bored students.

Such symptoms, which we describe as practices present in the daily lives of many curricula, are taken, most of the time, without estrangement, without struggle, without reflection; they are taken or, perhaps, even accepted as part of a curriculum that facilitates, helps, teaches. Hence the ethical, aesthetic and political urgency of stopping to think, to trace other narratives, to take writing as an exercise in thought and life, to *take the word in hand*.

We are teachers and adults of reference for children; we cannot confuse what we do with a mere fulfillment of tasks. Seffner (2016, p. 55, our translation) points out that "[...] the subject who transitions from teacher to reference adult is the one able to see that school education has impacts far beyond the discipline he or she teaches, and impacts that concern the lives of students." For human formation is beyond students' results in assessments and *rankings*.

We understand that this is a choice that many of us have not made. We explain it: when we refer to the symptoms of the neoliberal capitalist logic, we understand that we are as much part of this system as it is part of us. Thus, we do not seek to blame or name those who resist and those who do not. We put ourselves in this collective, precisely so that, together, we can produce the possible gaps of action, of ruptures, of micro-cracks.

Dardot, Gueden, and Laval (2021) help us understand these issues, as *they fight* with their words in the book *Choice of Civil War: another history of neoliberalism*. In this work, they explain the strength of neoliberal rationality and question how we got to what we live today, in times of ode to ethical, aesthetic, political, human barbarism. The authors argue that neoliberalism was consolidated in several ways, and one of them was the weakening of the masses, the collectives, because "[...] how to limit the power of a politically united people?" (Dardot; Gueden; Laval, 2021, p. 7, our translation). We are talking about a process of decades, in which our rights have been violated, one by one; our education, dismantled, and our memory, erased through the breaking of transmission.

Veiga-Neto (2011), in the same way, stresses what we are producing in the educational field—and more, how we are producing ourselves with it—, leading us to think that it is not only about the memories that we are not creating, but what is happening to collective life when nothing is done, when there is no memory. Thus, in the wake of neoliberalism, we are replacing what is of the school—therefore, of life—with what is of immediate and individual pleasure, performance, and making.

In this sense, we emphasize that the current Brazilian educational curriculum, regulated by the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC, 2018), which has been built and rebuilt over the last decade, has undergone many "advances" and many "setbacks." If, on the one hand, we manage to have in hand this document that presents us with the basis so dreamed of since the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação*) in 1996, on the other hand, we realize that perhaps this path has not been trodden in the best way and through assertive

choices. The BNCC has a lot to be modified and, perhaps, our greatest job today is to produce scientific knowledge that can explain why the logic of skills and competencies produces even greater chasms between us and our students.

If, on the one hand, part of Brazilian Early Childhood Education has managed to advance exponentially in relation to understandings and practices that respect and value children and childhoods, on the other hand, this is not the reality of Early Childhood Education as a field, as a national basis. In this context, when it comes to problematizing the curriculum we have today, it is up to us to ask: where do these textbooks and workbooks fit, when we know that these materials are of another order, other than that of thought, collective construction, exchanges, dialogue, imagination? What is the value given to an overloaded curriculum that values the logic of acceleration, the fulfillment of tasks, through a ready-made, programmed book that waits for standardized answers?

In view of this, it becomes important to problematize: what invitations are we making, when we have a curriculum that guides *making* in disregard of creation? What are we valuing when a curriculum is overloaded with tasks? How does a child feel invited to see the beauty of life, if he or she has only 15 minutes of 'pause', suspension, 'free time', considering here the notion of *skholè*? What ethical love for the world are we teaching, when we replace everyday life with the production of sameness?

4. Distributing words as seeds

Schuler (2021, p. 46, our translation), reading Seneca (2018, p. 125), teaches us that

> [...] All knowledge, all accumulated patrimony, belongs to everyone, and words must be distributed as seeds to develop the ears. For that reason, we write for ourselves, but also for others, for common use. Therefore, learning goes beyond simple recollection, because 'having in memory' is to retain what has already been memorized; 'knowing', on the contrary, is to make what we have learned our own, without being dependent on a model or constantly looking to the master.

There lies something that we can say is this curriculum that we are dealing with: making the accumulated cultural heritage touchable, palatable for children. Invite them to see beauty, to know the world, to play with it. Bring this world closer to them. There is no point in having it if it is not transmitted in a dignified way to the children. We try to deal, then, with this curriculum that precisely inaugurates children in the world, which has the responsibility of transmitting knowledge and building the memories that are part of our legacy, of our people—that are not only the modern Westerner—of what is human. What the children will do from what they have received and how they have received it is not for us to say. A curriculum that invites, not guides: leads, shows, calls, asks for the word and the gesture, "[...] where a simple gesture becomes an act of creation" (Tessler, 2020, p. 201, our translation), a gesture that says and asks: let's go?

We sought to bring to this text a set of authors who help us to think about the curriculum in the contemporary school space in its articulations with childhood, problematizing the excess in which our society is immersed and the ways in which we have received children at school. We take the image of the written word in a clothespin, from the work of Elida Tessler, as an invitation from someone who is ready to receive and welcome the word of the other. We explored the Arendtian idea of the relationship between birth and the renewal of the world to problematize the curriculum.

Combining the distribution of words as seeds leads us to think about the possible ways of sowing other possibilities of being in the world and in school and, as well as Schuler's quote, which operates as another invitation: to distribute words as seeds, pointing us to the meaning of delivering. These two movements brought by Tessler and Schuler—*receiving* and *delivering*—prompt us to think about the conditions of possibility of working with education, with the curriculum and with childhood in the contemporary times. Our invitation is to look at the school floor and create micro-cracks for the seeds to enter and find cracks to grow in.

This curriculum may have the sole task of showing and transmitting what came before; of receiving and welcoming newcomers, to respect and celebrate what is to come with childhood. That is why we believe it is important "[...] to think about the displacements that a curriculum needs to make to free itself from previously organized formulas about what to teach and what to learn" (Correa; Sampaio; Borja, 2023, p. 1158, our translation). For a curriculum is a path, a trajectory in time and space, but, above all, a curriculum is what forges our "identity" (Silva, 2015), which we translate into *our way of thinking and being in the world*.

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