

Shaping spirits, reforming bodies, counting knowledge

How are social representations, subjectification processes, and the institutionalization of practices produced at a time when technological resources accelerate the possibilities of registration, treatment, and exchange of data that can be used for the management of people, objects, and actions? What reflections and refractions of reality can be glimpsed when there are control mechanisms that claim to be supported by technical rationality, with the offer of access that is direct, transparent, and unmediated by criticism to a world that can supposedly be fully scrutinized, visible in its entirety, revealed in images provided dynamically and continuously to the consumers of endless imaginary novelties?

The control of discourses (FOUCAULT, 2008) is based on mechanisms of regulation of practices, concepts, subjects, and objects. One could try to search for the limits of such discourses, infer their functionalities, and stabilize their forms. The considerations on such control are re-signified under the production conditions in which meanings come together no longer only by prohibition, erasure, or concealment, but also by their incessant reproduction and distribution, endless presence, and absolute dispersion.

In this volume of *Education and Research*, we have gathered studies that critically respond not only to the forms of control rooted in the very foundations of literate culture, grounded in the possibilities of printed writing, but also to those established thanks to electronic communication resources (CHARTIER, 2002). From the latter, in the digital world, the ways of management, production, and distribution of culture, the forms of interaction and the processes of subjectification have been organized.

In such a state of affairs, the possibilities of resistance, interpretation, and criticism take place as opposed to a set of historically constituted statements, which sometimes reaffirm themselves as similar or transformed, and sometimes are evident in their novelty. In this sense, this issue of *Education and Research* begins with two studies on political ordering and subjectification in the context of the emergence of digital culture.

In “Subjects in the face of contemporary acceleration and limitlessness”, Claudine Haroche addresses the effects on subjects currently immersed in spacetime as produced by information technology. According to the author, participating in the culture of acceleration, fluidity, non-interruption leads subjects to the loss of the sense of the self and to the risk of atomization, since there is no longer the management of the self in the face of the other, the subjectification mode prevalent before, but rather the relation with the screen, with the audiovisual, in a continuous flow: “As permanent change results in the loss of stable spatial and time reference points, unlimited and continuous adaptation is imposed on the individual, who cannot

realize their meaning”. This state of affairs, according to Haroche, is leading subjects to psychically constitute themselves in a fragmented way, which results in the dilution of subjectivity and the inability to produce forms of socialization.

Forms of subjectification are also the subject of the article by Sônia Cristina Vermelho, Ana Paula Machado Velho, and Valdecir Bertonecelo. They address the concept of network in opposition to hierarchical principles that have historically referenced the organization of social relations in the West. In “On the concept of social networks and their researchers”, they discuss “why a concept that had been used, up to a certain moment in human history, in limited situations has become an explanatory concept of society and, more recently, a theoretical model that guides the development of a technology”. Thus, the contradiction between a highly verticalized social organization, guided by hierarchical difference, and a social network process, which is based on horizontality, is evidenced. What effects does this contradiction have on subjectification in the world today?

Possibilities of combating the mechanisms that conform ways of being, living, and thinking can be found in the following articles of this volume of *Education and Research*.

In “Practices of anorexia and bulimia as an aesthetics of existence”, Marisa Helena Silva Farah and Cecilia Hanna Mate analyze and discuss the propositions conveyed in the virtual environment by and for young people who experience wills related to making their bodies conform to certain standards of beauty associated with weight loss. They examine publications that provide input for the control of food intake and, consequently, of weight. Through data analysis, the authors evidence “three sets of experiences that intertwine: experiences of body modification, virtual identity experiences, and experiences of the self”. They point out the contribution that knowledge on the modes of subjectification of young people – in this case, female adolescents – can bring to the school, especially with regard to teachers’ relationships with their students.

The forms of subjectification and social positioning of women are also observed by Neiva Furlin, in the article “The experience of intersubjectivity in feminist research: methodological perspectives”. The author examines forms of interdiction of the performance of female teachers in educational institutions traditionally oriented by “hegemonic discourses and gender logics of a male social order”. Based on this problematic, Neiva Furlin discusses the methodological constraints to scientific doing and, referenced in the hermeneutic perspective, she proposes that knowledge is constructed not in a universal, but rather in a situated way and that it is open to interpretation, which responds more coherently to the feminist epistemologies and their role in political processes.

Also addressing gender issues, but, in this case, related to the male gender, Daniele Alcântara Nascimento and Teresa Cristina Siqueira Cerqueira examine what references support the ways of conceiving the ethos projected by professors for their military school students. In “The conceptions the Military Police Academy professors have

of their students”, the authors evidence how compliance with the principles of hierarchization and discipline guide the relationships between professors and students, conditioning not only the representations of both produced by the subjects involved in the process, but also interaction in teaching practices.

Issues relating to the social and political functions assigned to the male gender, but from a more historic perspective, are also found in the article by Luiz Eduardo Oliveira, “The conservative party and literary education in the Brazilian empire (1841-1863)”. In his work, he describes the political actions aimed at making spirits conform to a certain concept of reality to respond to the interests of a ruling class. The author presents the disputes between representatives of groups that diverge ideologically on the orientation of the social organization of the country in the Brazilian empire and the consequences on how education was positioned to meet the aspirations of the group that took over the place of decision making. Literature teaching responded to the interests of the most conservative group and its project of forming the ruling elite as civilized and aware of its command, with a sense of nation circumscribed to those defined as part of it: future active citizens of the empire, that is, whites, or the “good society”, excluding almost naturally the slaves, the indigenous population, and nearly all women.

The four articles in the set presented above focus, therefore, on processes of subjectification and social, political, and ideological positioning. Although gender issues are present as part of the discussions, they are addressed in a somewhat more indirect way.

The third set of articles in this volume of the journal focuses on the issues related to the management of educational processes, regarding the economic and social aspects of the organization of education systems or undergraduate courses. In these studies, one can find the answers to the reordering of educational processes towards the needs of the market, and the effects of these answers on the unequal distribution of early childhood, primary and secondary education, or on the repositioning of universities as to what their social function is thought to be (CHAUÍ, 2001).

In “The future of the economist’s utopia in the Chilean school system”, Jorge A. Alarcón Leiva, Claudio E. Frites Camilla, and Carla Gajardo Poblete examine the consequences of the subjection of the Chilean education system to market logic, when, thirty years ago, the bases of offer and demand of schooling were established according to the precepts of neoliberalism. The authors point to the fact that the project’s objectives have not been met and that such project is an “economist’s utopia”, as it was “assumed that the educational system should function as a market; that is, it should be subjected solely to the rules of supply and demand, and that the *qua homo economicus* man (FOUCAULT, 2007) should move within it”. They also discuss the effects that the change from a public system to a commodified one has had on the Chilean society, and the consequent need, defended in the article, for ensuring equitable distribution of education, in order to guarantee that democracy takes place not only as a system of government but also as a way of life, in which citizens can recognize one another as equals.

In the following article, “Regulation of Brazilian higher education: The Technological Innovation Act and the Public-Private Partnership Act”, by Maria Creusa de Araújo Borges, one can observe the repositioning, by operation of law, of the Brazilian university system to the place of commercial service. In the work, the author starts “from the premise that this regulatory framework recovers key ideas from *Plano Diretor da Reforma do Aparelho do Estado* [Master Plan for the Reform of the State Apparatus] (BRASIL, 1995), particularly the concept of higher education as a tradable service, the regulation of which is established, at a global level, by the *General Agreement on Trade in Services* (GATS, 1995), conceived at the World Trade Organization (WTO)”. The author then examines the constitution of the concept of productive university, with productivity associated exclusively to technological innovation.

A movement opposite to the ones established by the commodification of higher education can be observed in the article “A case of countertrend: Low dropout rates among chemistry degree students explained by habitus and integration”, by Luciana Massi and Alberto Villani. The authors show how the reception of students by the university – which offers them resources to remain studying – and the sense of social and academic integration that it promotes among students favor their adherence to the course, which is reflected in lower student dropout. Opposed to what was observed in the two articles previously discussed in this editorial, this study evidences that, rather than competition, collaborative coexistence fosters a more egalitarian educational process.

Along similar lines, the article by Lílian Ferrugini and Cleber Carvalho de Castro, “Socioeconomic repercussions of the pilot course on Administration by UAB as seen by its graduates and coordinators” observes the effects of higher education on graduates. Research findings have evidenced the prominence that this distance education course obtained from other institutions as a milestone for other experiences with this modality to be proposed. But, more than that, data has shown that, for the subjects involved in the experience – former students and coordinators –, “social benefits, including greater capacity argumentation and increased self-confidence, exceeded the economic benefits such as increased income and a change of job”.

In the set aforementioned, we publish studies that challenge the logic of financialization of education and reduction of social relations to currency units as the measure of all things (FELTRAN, 2014).

The following articles address the possibilities of transforming educational settings (related or not to schools) to foster more meaningful subjectification experiences for their participants.

Rocío Chao Fernández, María Dorinda Mato Vázquez, and Andrea M^a López Chao, in “Are music and mathematics worked on in an interdisciplinary way during early childhood education?”, highlight the importance of promoting interdisciplinarity at school, in order to provide students with more enriching teaching and learning. The

researchers interview mathematics and music teachers in Spain to know what they think about the relation between both disciplines and whether they work on them in an integrated way. The authors indicate the need to encourage an interdisciplinary approach, which would require continuing teacher education.

Also addressing the teaching of mathematics, Maria Fatima Oliveira, João Garrott M. Negreiros, and Ana Cristina Neves, in “Constraints of learning mathematics: a historical review of the literature”, observe which factors are related to difficulties in learning mathematics. For this, three internal constraints (brain functioning, spoken language, and learning style), and two external constraints (sociocultural factors and teaching styles) are characterized. Given the complexity of the issue, they consider the need for teachers to know what strategies to adopt in the face of the specificities of their students; hence teachers’ leading role in the process of teaching and learning.

Luciana Soares Muniz and Albertina Mitjans Martínez turn to the learning of one’s mother tongue. In the article “The expression of creativity in learning how to read and write: a case study”, they present the findings of a study for which they observed two students in the first two grades of primary education in a public school. Based on a theoretical perspective proposed by one of the authors, Mitjans Martínez, they consider that “Creativity is an emergence and not something that we carry and that becomes evident in the different actions and contexts that we experience”. In this sense, creativity is intrinsically related to the action of a subject in context. The researchers also emphasize the importance of the playful dimension for creative processes, and thus the contribution of the development of imaginary scenarios by the subjects involved in learning.

This set of articles closes with a study by Janete Inês Müller and Lodenir Becker Karnopp, “Cultural translation in education: experiences of difference in deaf writing”. They observe the work on identity and difference in narratives written in Portuguese by deaf authors for young and adult readership. The researchers indicate the importance of considering such work not only because of its contribution to the dissemination and legitimation of deaf culture, but also because of what they represent in power relations: the construction of meanings that express the positions of the subjects that make up such culture.

Lastly, we bring the interview conducted by professor Cristiane Maria Cornelia Gottschalk, from Faculdade de Educação, Universidade de São Paulo, with Paul Standish, professor and head of University College London Institution of Education. In “A conversation with Paul Standish about the *trail-effects* of psychology and the audit culture in education”, the interviewee answers how philosophical knowledge can help us understand the current world more broadly. In the interview, professor Standish also discusses issues related to educational assessment policy, when he criticizes the transfer of accounting procedures typical of the administration field to address educational issues. Such transfer aims at “accounting transparency” through assessment practices, which responds to a “knowledge economy” in which knowledge is seen as a commodity.

Therefore, the articles and the interview in this issue of *Education and Research* allow observing how accounting, commodification, and financialization principles have been increasingly taken as a basis for projecting modes of human interaction to be shaped by educational processes that are expected to be useful, instrumental. The promotion of strategies of action measurement supports global hierarchization and staggering, in which economic power no longer recognizes historically established borders of any order (SANTOS, 2000).

At a time when the production of knowledge is the market's function, the difference is controlled no longer only by the will to suppress it, but also through its relative ordering: difference can exist as long as it knows its place. In this state of affairs, respect for diversity can occupy the ambiguous place of resistance front (in opposition to discriminatory practices) and control mechanism (let it exist, provided that at a distance, in a determined place).

Such process imposes itself aiming at naturalizing power relations, projecting a perspective of transparency in the face of the objective world, under the illusion of unmediated access to reality. Offering opposite views that enable interpreting and criticizing such conditions is a resistance tool towards a more egalitarian world. The studies gathered in this volume of *Education and Research* can contribute to this.

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