



Governmentality and political networks: theoretical-methodological tools in research on curriculum policies

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ABSTRACT. This article aims to present the notions of governmentality in Foucault and governance political networks in Ball as useful analytical tools to think about other effects of Brazilian curricular policies, especially the most recent ones. Thus, the question is: is it possible to mobilize such notions as theoretical-methodological potentialities in research on curriculum policies? The argument is based on the defense that its operations make it possible to understand how curriculum policies have been manufactured and permeated by diverse voices and multiple interests. Regarding the methodological aspects, the present study is built on the platform of post-structural epistemology of *Foucauldian* philosophy with the notion of governmentality and the understanding of political networks elaborated by Ball. In the face of emergency of other ways of thinking, reflecting and acting on history, society and politics, such approaches allow us to unveil, at the heart of discursive complexes, a political anatomy of governance. Curricular policies, therefore, are technologies manufactured from the knowledge-power connection. They are products of political networks directed, in a practical sense, to conduct behaviors, subjectivities and populations. In this order, other ways of life are rejected in the face of a common project of the individual, giving way to the neoliberalized subject, trained and formed as human capital, incapable of contesting the power that is exercised over itself.

Keywords: Governmentality; brazilian curriculum policies; methodological possibilities; governance political networks.

Governamentalidade e redes políticas: ferramentas teórico- metodológicas na pesquisa em políticas curriculares

RESUMO. O presente artigo tem como objetivo apresentar as noções de governamentalidade em Foucault e redes políticas de governança em Ball como instrumentos analíticos profícuos para pensar outros efeitos das políticas curriculares brasileiras, sobretudo as mais recentes. Assim, questiona-se: é possível mobilizar tais noções como potencialidades teórico-metodológicas na pesquisa em políticas de currículo? O argumento baseia-se na defesa de que suas operacionalidades viabilizam compreender como as políticas curriculares têm sido fabricadas e perpassadas por vozes diversas e interesses múltiplos. Sobre os aspectos metodológicos, o presente estudo se constrói na plataforma da epistemologia pós-estrutural da filosofia *foucaultiana* com a noção de governamentalidade e o entendimento de redes políticas elaborado por Ball. Diante da emergência de outros modos de pensar, refletir e atuar sobre a história, a sociedade e a política, tais abordagens permitem desvelar, no âmago dos complexos discursivos, uma anatomia política da governança. As políticas curriculares, por isso, são tecnologias fabricadas a partir da conexão saber-poder. São produtos de redes políticas direcionados, em um sentido prático, para conduzir condutas, subjetividades e populações. Nessa ordem, outras formas de vidas são rechaçadas frente ao um projeto comum de indivíduo, dando lugar ao sujeito neoliberalizado, treinado e formado como capital humano, incapaz de contestar o poder que sobre si é realizado.

Palavras-chave: governamentalidade; políticas curriculares brasileiras; possibilidades metodológicas; redes políticas de governança.

Gubernamentalidad y redes políticas: herramientas teórico-metodológicas en investigaciones sobre políticas curriculares

RESUMEN. Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar las nociones de gubernamentalidad en Foucault y las redes políticas de gobernanza en Ball como herramientas analíticas útiles para pensar otros efectos de las políticas curriculares brasileñas, especialmente las más recientes. Entonces, la pregunta es: ¿es posible movilizar tales nociones como potencialidades teórico-metodológicas en la investigación sobre políticas curriculares? El argumento parte de la defensa de que sus operaciones permiten comprender cómo las políticas

curriculares han sido fabricadas y permeadas por diversas voces y múltiples intereses. En cuanto a los aspectos metodológicos, el presente estudio se construye sobre la plataforma de la epistemología posestructural de la filosofía *foucaultiana* con la noción de gubernamentalidad y la comprensión de las redes políticas elaboradas por Ball. Frente a la emergencia de otras formas de pensar, reflexionar y actuar sobre la historia, la sociedad y la política, tales enfoques permiten develar, en el centro de los complejos discursivos, una anatomía política de la gobernabilidad. Las políticas curriculares, por tanto, son tecnologías fabricadas a partir de la conexión saber-poder. Son productos de redes políticas dirigidas, en un sentido práctico, para conducir comportamientos, subjetividades y poblaciones. En este orden, se rechazan otras formas de vida frente a un proyecto común de individuo, dando paso al sujeto neoliberalizado, entrenado y formado como capital humano, incapaz de disputar el poder que se ostenta sobre sí mismo.

Palabras-clave: gubernamentalidad; políticas curriculares brasileñas; posibilidades metodológicas; redes políticas de gobernanza.

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Introduction

Brazilian curriculum policies – most visibly from the 1990s – have been thought of in new forms, in new spaces and by new actors. They, in the new era of neoliberal rationality, have been producing meanings for an economized curriculum centered on the idea of the common, universal and capable of subsidizing quality that is supposedly lacking in public education today.

In order to think differently, if not to that imposed on us by the market, and to seek to analyze other effects and meanings that the most recent curricular policies have carried out, the approach to the notion of governmentality in Foucault and political governance networks in Ball becomes fruitful. Both epistemologies form the theoretical-methodological framework that enables the development of this study.

In this sense, the question is: is it possible to mobilize the notions of governmentality and political governance networks as theoretical-methodological potentialities in research on curriculum policies? Yes! The argument is justified in the understanding that such notions enable the understanding of how these policies have been manufactured and permeated by different voices and interests, which attribute new senses and meanings to the curricula intended in schools.

Thus, the proposed objective, from the point of view of *Foucault's philosophy* and Ball's ideas, is to highlight: a) governmentality as a technology that appears in curriculum policy as a mechanism for conducting conducts, subjectivities and population management. And, for this reason, it is operated, in this investigation, as an analytical instrument to think of Brazilian curricular policy as a regulatory and control device; and b) the indispensability, as a result, of analyzing the policy taking into account what Ball (2018, p. 2) suggests, that is, policy researchers need to direct their attention to the 'which' and 'where' of policy. Thus, the use of political governance networks works, here, as a method, technique and appropriate gnoseological research basis to interpret new policy methods and new forms of political relations (Ball, 2018).

The statement that it is possible to use the notions of governmentality and political governance networks to analyze the most recent curricular policies in Brazil, shows that they are the products of intertwined networks of social actors, companies, transnational organizations, political parties, educational entities, foreign universities, among other actors that reverberate, at the local level, the needs and desires of an education project along the lines of the global sphere.

In this course, it is fundamental, in neoliberal logic, the subjugation of the politician to the precedence of united politics, capable of leading the living body, building human capital, producing workers, maximizing the economy and "[...] nullifying the effects of undecided divisions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation" (Foucault, 2013, p. 138).

Governmentality and political governance networks: dialogues between Foucault and Ball

First, this text is an exercise of analysis on the possibility of approaching the notion of governmentality and political governance networks in the movement for the study of curricular policies in Brazil, adjusted, above all, to the context of global educational policy. This venture, therefore, is yet another attempt to detach research on educational policy from a narrow conception of policy as government.

The intention here is to walk through a sociology of policies that allows us to understand the process of curricular policies in a post structural, non-linear, dialectical reality, in which the universal and the particular, the similar and the dissimilar, the global and the local are understood as interconnected and mutually crossed principles, and not as cultural polarities (Ball, 2014).

In the effort to expose an unlimited field of events that can be observed, every theory will be inflated by an intrinsic historical experience. With regard to governmentality, it announces a certain type of rationality in government practice. It is a first notion that has roots in specific disciplinary and rational principles, namely: the problems of leading, regulating and governing populations from discursive complexes considered true.

This configuration of political, social and economic thinking allows us to define how to govern from an idea of the State, a predefined State, but at the same time it is an object to be produced. In this regard, Foucault in the 'Birth of biopolitics' explains that the State is something that exists and at the same time is in the process of elaboration. The State reason is based on the rationalization of a practice that will be established between the pre-supposed State and another to be built.

As for the notion of political networks, this is a governance technology that arises in a historical scenario of the last decades of the twentieth century, a scenario marked by the instabilities of the social welfare state, the emergence of demands from different segments, the emergence of post-industrial capitalism (Moreira & Santos, 2020), economic globalization and the performance of transnational agents.

Ball (2014) states that political networks constitute a new model of governance, but not in a singular and harmonious way, and position new sources of authority and, in fact, a market of authority on the board of policy processes. They are not static, but are constantly changing, becoming nebulous and polycentric (Avelar, Nikita & Ball, 2018). In them, an entanglement of actors – increasingly active in the production of policies and service provision – connects to other complex networks that support the global diffusion of neoliberal ideas and their manifestations, consequently, in government policies and programs (Ball, 2014).

Thus, the notion of political networks can be taken as a useful way to think about policy processes. They constantly evolve, move in the rhythm of discursive complexes and globalization, are generative and dynamic, do not allow demarcating origin, nor a point of arrival. Networks, therefore, work "[...] to extend the flow of ideas and multiply positions from which the appearance of expanded acceptance is spoken of and created" (Ball, 2014, p. 93). Thus, new places, channels and opportunities are, at all times, being produced and modified within the relationships of networks – fluid and opaque – with the effect of forming social capital (Ball, 2014).

Both technologies – governmentality and political networks – are tools of neoliberal rationality that inaugurates a type of state that is essentially manager. "Governing, managing, planning, carrying out government programs, regulating eventual conflicts and market missteps, all this is part of the broad field of governmentality" (Branco, 2019, p. 103), and I say neoliberal governmentality.

The intricate process of political, social, cultural and economic changes in recent years says a lot about the emergence and articulations of complex networks of policies composed of public and private organizations, multilateral agencies, foundations, institutes, NGOs, which have come to demand the control and political management of economic and social agents, as well as the control and conduct of individuals and populations. This political dynamic therefore represents the governmentalized state (Foucault, 2008a). It is a certain control that can be conceived as a "[...] political technology of the body" (Foucault, 2013, p. 29).

Governmentality, for this reason, becomes a powerful analytical instrument in research in the field of education. Foucault himself made use of this notion throughout his investigations as a methodological possibility, as a lens created to work on a problem. And he conceptualized it as a set of institutions, procedures, analyzes, reflections, calculations and tactics that "[...] allow exercising this very specific, although very complex form of power that has as its main target the population, by main way of knowing the political economy and by essential technical instrument the security devices" (Foucault, 2008b, p. 143).

In the meantime, Ball, when weaving network analysis and network governance, mobilizes Foucault's ideas to say that political governance networks are, likewise, a method, as a sphere of institutional articulations, which operate from analyzes of global scenarios based on quantitative data, that is, this is an analytical technique to think, calculate and establish governance tactics considering the structuring of communities of policies and their social relations.

That said, the approach of networks to think about curriculum policies allows us to glimpse a whole complex of real transformations in the modes of governance of education, both global and local (Ball, 2014).

In general terms, this means a microphysics of power put at stake by institutions and by different agents and their apparatus to validate a discourse of truth or regimes of truth that produce a knowledge of the body, a submissive and productive body.

This knowledge of the body is not a knowledge that refers to the science of its functioning, but, as Foucault (2013) points out, it is a knowledge of the political body that brings together the material elements and the “[...] techniques that serve as weapons, reinforcement, communication routes and support points for power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subject them to making them objects of knowledge” (Foucault, 2013, p. 31).

All this makes sense when it is possible to think of this power as a disciplinary power, which is employed over the trained, the corrected, children, teachers, students, among other bodies. From an understanding that curriculum policies are constituted as disciplinary spaces, as devices for conducting conducts, as means of manufacturing workers and as mechanisms of subjectivation, it is possible to say that the curricula that emanate from them become instruments of a political anatomy that imprisons the body, governing it based on the instrumentality of economic knowledge, controlling it via safety devices.

What exists, in fact, between the State and individuals and populations is an apparent security pact. Curriculum policies, in this sense, are security pacts. Before that, there is a whole articulation of discourses stimulated by diverse voices that claim multiple interests. These are economic, cultural, social and political interests that end up influencing public education policies. It is the claim of the *homo economicus* to the detriment of the *homo politicus* (Foucault, 2008a). It is the very production of policies in the educational sphere by the political governance networks.

In this context, the State proposes, through public policies, security against everything that can be understood as uncertain, harmful or risky. Is public education failing? We will create policies to improve its quality. However, there are relations between the public and the private in this movement. A managerial dualism that presupposes establishing security, a pact for the population – economic education policies – with supposed guarantees of quality, justice and a good social order.

These guarantees are lulled by discourses legitimized as true within the political networks that have the power to produce curricular policies aligned with market principles. Quality, justice and a good social order, therefore, presuppose that there are subjects who need social attention and care, because they carry in their bodies “[...] risks to organized and civilized society” (Branco, 2019, p. 106).

In other words, these discourses are the reverberation of a truth born before our own eyes, and “[...] can integrate, under certain conditions and to some extent, the procedures of control [...]” (Foucault, 1999, p. 66) which are operated to govern and produce subjectivities elaborated and conducted through rationalized techniques.

In practice, such guarantees become techniques to govern subjects through collections of normative maxims, which consist of “[...] a set of moral technologies that work in, within and through public sector institutions and workers” (Ball, 2014, p. 65). I am pointing out, with this, to the fact that Brazilian curricular policies, especially the most recent ones, are devices of neoliberal governmentality; tools that are operated to try to stiffen subjects, forcing them to adapt to certain rules, or pay penalties in case of inadequacy.

By the way, these policies impose a pre-established way of life, and individuals must submit to it. Non-subjection places them in a condition of non-human, marginalized, due to the very maneuver of institutions and the market. For this reason, educational and curricular policies impact the economic life of the nation in which they materialize. They act by reforming the subjects and transforming them into neoliberal subjects, into different types of workers, into human capital, as well as commodifying educational practice. For Ball (2014), neoliberal technologies work to produce docile and productive, responsible and entrepreneurial bodies.

In education, it can be said that public policies are thought, articulated and produced with a view to building neoliberal reform curricula. Thus, these neoliberal curricula consist of interconnected devices of governance, means and ways of how to govern. They are closely linked to the performativity policy, which is a vital component of management, governance and enterprise.

Performativity says a lot about how management and performance systems work in practitioners' subjectivities. “In fact, performativity is the form par excellence of neoliberal governmentality, which encompasses subjectivity, institutional practices, economy and government” (Ball, 2014, p. 66).

Within the framework of neoliberal normativity, the conduction of the subject is guided by the forces of subjectivity. Subjects guided and disciplined by the market, governed by norms. And these regulatory norms act performatively. They act, above all, through policies, and, notably, through the recent public policies of education produced and operated from the principles of neoliberal rationality. Such principles expose an

alignment between economic and business interests and conservative demands. The articulation of these interests generates impacts on educational policies, influencing the directions of education, legitimizing certain knowledge to the detriment of others, conforming and (en)forming the subjects.

Politics, therefore, is performative. “Like any rule, politics is performative, it only exists in operation when reiterated” (Macedo & Ranniery, 2018, p. 744). Thus, performative effects may be or may become effects “[...] of power that we must learn to read” (Butler, 2015, p. 117). These effects are part of the very process of materializing the condition of humanity; of conditioning the subject who can appear before the law that implicitly legalizes and determines him (Butler, 2015). In this sense, Brazilian public education policies, such as the National Common Curriculum Base, the National Education Plan, state and municipal education plans, are performative policies aimed at producing monolithic subjects and identities, as well as governing and determining conduct.

Performativity first, and fundamentally, draws “[...] that characteristic of linguistic utterances that, at the time of enunciation, makes something happen or brings some phenomenon into existence” (Butler, 2018, p. 35). It is a form of designation, the naming of a power that speech, in a powerful way, acts to produce a new condition or mobilize a compound of effects. Butler (2018) illustrates this idea with practical examples: the credit to God for the first performative act – let there be light, and light comes into existence –; the wars that almost always follow the declarations that announce their imminence; or the production of married couples as a result of the enunciation of the judges who declare them united under legal conditions.

As performative instruments of governance, curriculum policies are expected to operate within a framework of judgment in which the conception of improvement and effectiveness is prescribed by ourselves and indicated by measures of quality and productivity. The performative curriculum, therefore, is a key mechanism of neoliberal management. In the first order, its effect is self-responsibility; when the subject assumes the responsibility “[...] to work hard, faster and better [...]” (Ball, 2014, p. 66), when he takes responsibility for his own productivity as part of his self-worth and appreciation of others (Ball, 2014).

This form of power is invested in the present daily life, without delay, which “[...] categorizes the individual, marks him with his own individuality, links him to his own identity, imposes on him a law of truth, which we must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects” (Foucault, 1995, p. 235). This refers to the fact that “[...] power cannot reproduce without investing in a body, which means that a body is formed in power, and is formed there, within its terms [...]” (Butler, 2008, p. 118), in a performative movement of constant re-elaboration from the validation of a hegemonic archetype.

All this concerns a complex geography of neoliberalism that extends into the Nation-state. Policy mobility, therefore, translates into embedded practices (Ball, 2014). Educational policies, in this sense, bring together a power complex for the creation of imagined landscapes and individuals. In all this, the notion of governmentality as a methodological possibility, as well as the notion of political networks allow mapping the actors that move in the backstage of educational policies, their interests and discourses that, at an indeterminate moment, intersect and create a consensus on policies, especially those aligned with market interests, the profit regime, and entrepreneurship.

The critical point of the interface between market and state is that of neoliberal governance, regulation and regulation. Through the lens of governmentality, it is possible to understand how political governance networks – while relational processes carried out in specific spatial contexts – create new mechanisms for the exercise of governance, for the channeling of subjectivities, for the orientation of the conduct and behavior of the subjects.

This means the production of non-questioning individuals, who peacefully accept the imposition of truths that define the legitimate way of living a life, a life under the orthogonal gaze of God (Foucault, 2014), as well as in Christian pastoral care. Those assisted by educational policies; those who adapt to them, obey them, submit to their norms and let themselves, therefore, be led towards the truth, become human, recognizable, visible and liveable. They are “[...] the good boy, the quiet citizen, the tireless and honest worker who asks little, who does not resist the instituted power game” (Branco, 2019, p. 108). They are those who do not participate or claim their participation in the instances of political decisions that happen elsewhere, in contexts distant from their reality, outside their knowledge and that determine their lives.

Understanding recent curriculum policies in Brazil under the lens of governmentality and governance policy network

The educational reforms undertaken since the 1980s provoked changes in a model of government based on well-being, which was changed, in the new order, to a type of governance under the prism of neoliberal rationality. In this understanding, let's say that what happened was the shift from a state-focused mode of government – sovereign government – to new governance strategies, new neoliberal governance configurations. From Avelar's point of view, Nikita & Ball (2018), this movement focuses on the processes of deregulation and privatization, and, therefore, “[...] these reforms have introduced new ways of organizing and delivering both services and policies” (Avelar, Nikita & Ball, 2018, p. 56).

In view of this, it is important to situate the curricular policies in force in Brazil, especially the current ones. And here I want to specifically locate one: the National Common Curriculum Base - BNCC, as a variable for analyzes on governmentality and political governance networks. But in a reference group, one can also mention the National Education Plan - PNE, the state and municipal education plans, the movements of (re)formulations of curricula from the construction of the reference curriculum documents for Basic Education in the states.

It should be noted, however, with regard to these curriculum policies specifically, that it is permissible to ensure that they come from articulations between demands configured as arising from political networks architected by disciplinary and epistemic communities, business, political parties, government technical teams, associations, institutions, diverse groups and social movements.

Within the scope of the Union, the states and the municipalities, with regard to the elaboration of these curricular policies under their competences, some actors were decisive for the chaining of these political networks, as well as for the effectiveness of the connections between the public and the private. It is worth highlighting in this scenario, therefore, the role of the *União Nacional dos Dirigentes de Educação - Undime*, the *Conselho Nacional de Secretários de Educação - Consed*, the *Movimento Todos pela Educação*, and the *Movimento Todos pela Base*.

Undime, for example, is a non-profit civil association that articulates with the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary Branch in order to contribute to the formulation, promotion and monitoring of education policies. On the occasion of the processing and approval of the PNE (2014-2024), *Undime* acted in the creation of a database with almost three thousand amendments presented to the Plan, as well as in the organization and participation in public hearings promoted by the Special Committee of the National Education Plan, in the preparation of regional seminars, in the production of data on the financing of public education in partnerships with the Itaú Social Foundation (Undime, 2022, [online]), in the construction of the governance manual directed to the sectional ones.

The main network that *Undime* is part of is the National Campaign for the Right to Education, which brings together more than two hundred organizations. Within the scope of this Campaign, we highlight the the *movimento Todos Pela Educação*, which acts as a ‘think tank’ in the study and analysis of educational data on investment in education, among other points. *Todos pela Educação* was “[...] founded by the presidents of several Brazilian companies, including the DPaschoal car parts chain, the Gerda Group and the Itaú, Bradesco and Santander banks” (Ball, 2014, p 63). It is a project that, as Ball (2014) states, has developed goals for Brazilian education and introducing performance monitoring tools with the collaboration of American and Brazilian education specialists.

The *Todos* works for the formulation and staging (Mainardes & Marcondes, 2009) of structuring national policies. In this sense, the Movement proposes, claims and produces supporting knowledge for new proposals, and monitors processes of new educational policies. The example of *Todos pela Educação* provides, therefore, an understandable *link* on the complex and changing relationships that are established between the market, the State and the public sector (Ball, 2014). This can be stated, given the relationships that the Movement establishes with organizations that finance it, such as the Lemann Foundation.

This Foundation supports a series of initiatives from diverse institutions that assume to ensure the learning of all students, and to engage leaders committed to solving the country's complex challenges. She also emphasizes that, for this to happen, it is necessary to leverage the experience and expertise of international philanthropies, business organizations and foreign universities, in order to train people from an allegedly quality education; people “[...] who can become leaders prepared and engaged to contribute to the development of the country” (Fundação Lemann, 2022, [online]).

In this enterprise, the Lemann Foundation maintains partnerships with Undime, Associação Nova Escola, American companies, with the Inter-American Development Bank, Modern Publishing House, American private schools, American and English universities, among them, Harvard University, Columbia University, University of Oxford; with Itaú Social, Instituto Votorantim, Instituto Unibanco, Instituto Natura, Fundação Roberto Marinho, Fundação Telefônica Vivo, Fundação Getúlio Vargas, and many other national and international organizations.

Consed and the *Movimento Todos pela Base* are also partners of the Lemann Foundation. Together, they work to implement the Base policy in practice and through practice, with the discourse that it contributes to the coherence between curricula, teacher training, teaching materials and evaluations. In this context, the *Consed* was responsible for preparing the BNCC guidance guides for states and municipalities, as well as promoting the integration of state education networks and intensifying the participation of states in the decision-making processes of educational policies.

We are, therefore, faced with an intricate network of political relations that, through connections like these, unveils a network of power, influences, ideas and money, equally intricate, but formidable. It interrelates with other networks that share a single banner: quality public education. It is in this way that the current curricular policies are being shaped and reformed under the platform of the public-private partnership. For this reason, it is the neoliberalization of the curriculum. From the public sector “[...] learn to face their supposed inadequacies, learn lessons from the methods and values of the private sector and learn to reform” (Ball, 2014, p. 65). That is, in another sense, there seems to be a movement that says that the public sector needs to learn the lessons taught by market disciplines.

All this involves instilling new sensitivities and values, and new forms of social relations in public sector practices. The private sector is the model to be emulated, and the public sector must be ‘undertaken’ in its image (Ball, 2014, p. 65).

Along this path, the political networks and the mode of governance they mobilized represent a set of real transformations in educational policies. That is, new networks and communities of policy start to operate according to different intentions and strive to consolidate large public-private partnerships as mechanisms for obtaining public resources with the intention of promoting the supposed improvement of the quality of education (Pereira, 2019). For Ball (2014), these are new policy assemblages with various participants that are in a new definition of policy space somewhere “[...] between multilateral agencies, governments, NGOs, consultants, social entrepreneurs and international companies, in traditional locations and in policy-making circles and beyond” (Ball, 2014, p. 35).

These networks, therefore, make up the imaginary of the new social, and constitute themselves as communities of policies based on common perceptions of social problems. In view of this, they are articulated to mobilize ‘innovations’ and validate what they believe to be a ‘good’ policy to solve such problems. And so, they continue to influence and dictate the direction of public education policies and build new meanings of curriculum.

Through the articulations between multiple demands, political groups organize themselves and curriculum meanings are produced (Lopes, 2015). But what meanings? What kind of curriculum policy takes precedence in political networks? What methodological possibilities can be assumed to think about recent curriculum policies in Brazil? Such questions guide the questioning that sustains the debate intended in this text. Thus, in order to constitute a conceptual, methodological and empirical tool to carry out the analysis, the question is asked: is it possible to mobilize the notions of governmentality and political governance networks as theoretical and methodological potentialities in research on curriculum policies?

Given this issue, it is clear that method, theory and philosophy interpenetrate, and enable the argument that the operability of the notions of governmentality and political governance networks, in the study of curricular policies, allows us to understand how they have been produced and biased by multiple voices, which represent diverse interests.

Recent Brazilian curriculum policies are products of governance political networks, and are therefore part of a functionality of neoliberal governmentality that aims to conduct conducts and produce governmentalized and uniform subjectivities, from the establishment of policies that intend to conform the plurality of lives to a unique model of subject, formed based on market metrics. It is important to say that this enterprise, in Brazil, but also in Latin America, gained momentum in the 1990s. The Brazilian educational policy reform movement was driven by a curricular kinesis that had already been happening in countries such as the United States and England. The idea of a common curriculum, of a standardized

evaluation on a large scale – whose intention is to measure the educational quality in peripheral countries –, of a schooled education for the world of work; this whole set of aspirations of transnational magnitude strained for the (re)formulation of curricular policies aligned with the new global order and the neoliberal rationality.

Among those in operation in Brazil, the BNCC stands out; a normative policy – product of the guidance of political networks – that emerges in a scenario of disputes for curriculum significance. The document brings in its body the definition of the “[...] organic and progressive set of essential learning that all students must develop throughout the stages and modalities of Basic Education” (Brasil, 2018, p. 7). It presents itself as a national reference for the construction of curricula and pedagogical proposals of school institutions. It also seeks to contribute to the alignment of other public policies and actions with regard to teacher training, evaluation, and the elaboration of educational content. The BNCC is the “[...] guide for the quality of education” (Brasil, 2018, p. 8), it is the device that supposedly guarantees students the development of skills.

The competent subject, therefore, is manufactured performatively through the mobilization of knowledge, concepts and procedures; practical, cognitive and socioemotional skills; “[...] attitudes and values to solve complex demands of daily life, the full exercise of citizenship and the world of work” (Brasil, 2018, p. 8).

This entire discursive complex appears in the Base policy as being characteristic of the neoliberal policy of governance, and becomes diffused through the relational processes of the networks that streamline social relations. Work, in this new order, becomes an educational principle. Education comes to be understood as something decisive for economic development. In neoliberal rationality, “[...] a close connection between education (school) and work is thus postulated; that is, education is considered to enhance work” (Saviani, 1996, p. 151).

Work as an educational principle is a reference present in the legal texts that govern the development of educational policies in Brazil. Functional policies to the capitalist system, whose place education in the context of work with obvious intentions of human capital formation, economic development and qualification of labor. Such a position can be witnessed since the Federal Constitution of 1988, when it claims in its Article 205 education as a mechanism for the development of the person, its preparation for the exercise of citizenship and its qualification for work (Brasil, 1988).

Other documents also systematize and postulate work as an educational principle: Article 1 of the General National Curriculum Guidelines, based on the 1988 Constitution, deals with the right of the person to their full development, preparation for the exercise of citizenship and qualification for work (Brasil, 2010). The Law of Guidelines and Basis of National Education, in its Article 1, § 2, says that school education must be linked to the world of work. And, based on the Constitution, it presents, in its Article 2, education as enabling the full development of the student and his/her qualification for work (Brasil, 1996).

The National Education Plan (2014-2024), as a guiding normative for the National Common Curricular Base, in its Article 2, Guideline V, also discusses training for work (Brasil, 2014). All this movement that places work as an educational principle finds in the Base's policy the platform for materializing training for labor activity, the construction of skills and professional training, potentiated, however, by the market actors who composed, and still compose, the BNCC's political governance network.

The focus of the Base is the development of competencies through the mobilization of universal knowledge capable of hypothetically guaranteeing educational quality and guiding, through essential curricula, about what students should know and know how to do. Apparently, the knowledge operated by the Base's policy is a knowledge to do something. Knowledge that allows the resolution of demands from the world of work by competent subjects, as well as the construction of life projects (Brasil, 2018). The focus on competencies is in line with that addressed in the international assessments of multilateral agencies such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - OECD, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO. Within these relationships and exchanges, hybrid organizational forms may be being demarcated, in which public and private interests are combined to provide means to improve the qualifications of the workforce, in response to the supposed demands of the global knowledge economy and potential entry into the labor market (Ball, 2014).

This reveals the applicability “[...]of the neoliberal imaginary in very real and practical ways in education and educational policy” (Ball, 2014, p. 230). As a result, all aspects of social life are regulated and economized. And new social actors are produced. Hybrid social subjects who are spatially mobile, ethically malleable, and able to speak the languages of the public and private value (Ball, 2014).

The signifiers that appear in the BNCC – essential learning, quality of education and competence – are part of a regime of truths created by transnational bodies, multilateral agencies, think tanks, business

organizations, public agents and large educational industries, connected in a network, to incite in individuals the desire to be competent, to acquire the valid knowledge from a supposedly quality education and, thus, to be able to solve complex demands of the world of work.

This is the performative movement of a policy being put into practice to conduct teacher and student subjectivities, governing them and assigning them responsibility for the production of self-truth (Foucault, 2014). The BNCC is a practical and very recent example of how political networks have been acting on public education policies in Brazil. It is the divine sign of the true restart, of purification from the sins that individuals have committed (Foucault, 2014). It is the common path that leads to salvation. Everyone must bow to the truth that this legislation speaks. Those who conform to it are seen as intelligible, livable and recognizable subjects. Non-compliance with their normativity classifies them as non-human, invisible, indolent and destined to social penalties.

The Base moves through the networks of policy relations – figure 1 – and between places of persuasion. They are complex and extensive networks through which a set of rationalities, meta discourses and logics flows, established as a basis for action. In the BNCC networks, actors such as the Lemann Foundation, the Inspirare Institute and the *Movimento Todos pela Educação*, articulated and connected to so many other public and private agents, act by transferring meanings of policies – obviously neoliberal – defined in global contexts to local contexts.

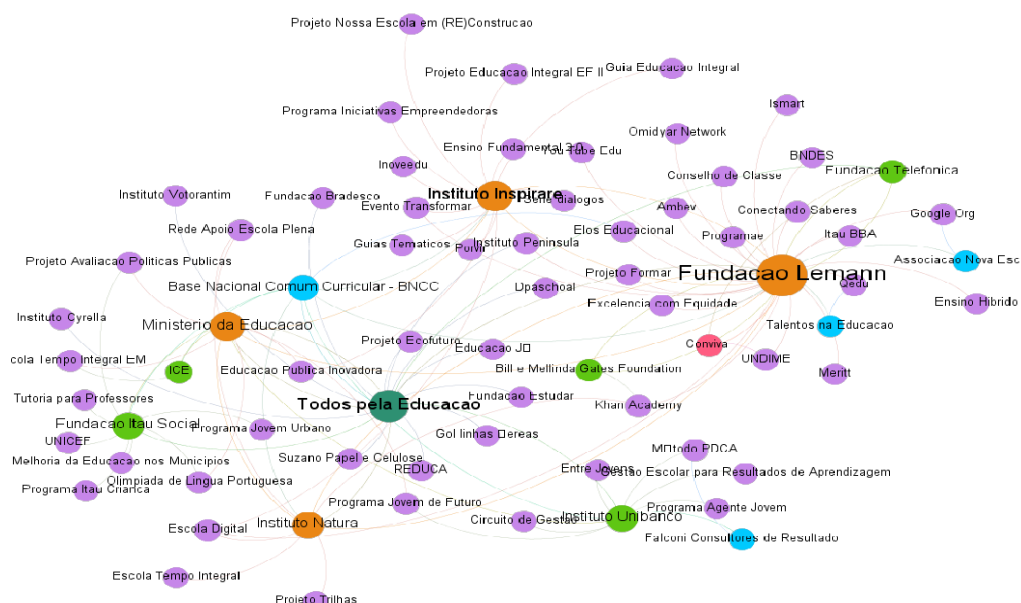


Figure 1. Influence network in the policy of the Common National Curriculum Base – BNCC.

Source: Silva (2018).

The figure shows that new channels and new opportunities are, at all times, being created within network relations, “[...] with the effect of building social capital” (Ball, 2014, p. 93). The actors who articulate in the network of influence of the BNCC policy work to disseminate the flow of ideas and extend positions that allow to speak and produce the feeling of full and consensual acceptance. This dynamic refers to the actions of these members who begin to disseminate and publish each other's works, lecture and present data on the educational reality in the events they jointly participate in, and support each other financially. It is in this scenario that the Base was manufactured, supported by groups, institutions, foundations and other entities connected to multilateral, business and transnational bodies. By this, I mean that a conception of curricular policy for Brazilian education, such as the BNCC, was first thought by foreign organizations and from transnational stimuli that, under the metric of numbers created via large-scale evaluations, work to influence the directions of education. This is based on what international, financial and philanthropic organizations idealize about what comes to be a quality education for Brazil.

I do not intend to bring here an exhaustive mapping of the political networks that invented the Base, but the ethnographic look at them reveals that the actors mentioned are local channels of policy mobility; they articulate and maintain partnerships with multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - OECD, foundations, national and multinational

companies, and American universities. This whole complex reverberates, in the micro-spaces of education, new ideas, meanings and meanings for curricular policies.

This type of analysis allows us to understand that these are pro-market policies, defense of neoliberalism and the structuring of a producer mechanism - an economized curriculum - of workers to meet market demands and business development. The Foundation, for this reason, can be understood as a political idea impregnated by authoritarian discourses of neoliberal economics in micro spaces.

By taking it as an empirical field of this brief analysis, I want to highlight the functionality of the network approach to say that the curricular policies in vogue are the result of the work undertaken in the name of “[...] neoliberal capitalism as a supranational project and as a set of local initiatives directed to political changes and business opportunity” (Ball, 2014, p. 80).

In addition, it acts by challenging the subjects towards an identity that is desired to be consensual, which starts to be adjusted by performance processes of regulation, self-regulation and collaborationist practices. This is the new way for the State to govern; to “[...] govern society and the economy and to shape individuals and their conduct” (Ball, 2014, p. 70), transforming them into subjects of governmentality, competition, self-responsibility and self-improvement as human capital.

For this reason, mobilizing the notion of governmentality, this new form of governance, allows us to think about how the practices of current rationality conduct the conducts, manufacture subjects and govern the populations. It is, therefore, governmentality as an instrument produced from political articulations, with the purpose of operating curricular policies as strategic governance mechanisms.

In other words, contemporary governmentality acts behind the scenes of political articulations on public education policies, and works for them to function as strategic tools of neoliberal governmentality, whose operate “[...] through the isolation of groups and individuals responsible for their transformation into entrepreneurs; [...] and the local implementation of rules of conduct” (Brown, 2018, p. 17). This governmentality produces, therefore, strategic paths for a certain rationality to be mobilized in order to enable enterprises and interventions in the conduct of the behaviors of the populations and, in an individualized way, of the subjects.

In this new order, it is characterized by the intersection of domination devices undertaken over others and over the technologies themselves (Foucault, 2014), and aims to produce a rationality of the governed. This rationality is not the product of unpredictability, but of motivations and provocations by and for obedience from truth, or from regimes of truth. A truth that is always in circulation, being mobilized by the systems of power that elaborate and sustain it.

In this logic, rationality is not only a product of the principles of truth, but also produces truth. Truth produces effects of power which begin to reproduce it. It is the regimes of truth that operate to conduct conducts and that, in this process of driving, end up being updated. The conduct of men is not possible without mobilizing the order of truth, and in this course, rationality is, at the same time, an artifact and producer of a regime of truth. “And this regime is not simply ideological or superstructural; it was a condition for the formation and development of capitalism” (Foucault, 1979, unpaginated). In this sense, curricular policies are constituted as material mechanisms of power, which show a very particular type of power that permeates the educational processes and their actors. In view of this, this power is identified as a kind of biopower. The public educational policies and the instruments they produce, be they: proposals, projects, curricula, practices, teaching materials, etc., become biopolitical devices, a viable way of operating power over the living, whose objective is the subjection of bodies and the control of populations through the exercise of biopower.

It is the work of governmentality that, in the new time, functions as a technology of biopower, whose fundamental mission is the administrative management of the population. According to Branco (2019, p. 74), the main occupation of this technology “[...] is the regulation of economic activities, as well as the articulation and strategic planning of economic life”. This control is put into practice through power techniques, that is, the safety mechanisms applied to populations and individuals, “[...] mechanisms that are properly mechanisms of social control, as in the case of the penalty, [...] mechanisms that have the function of modifying in something the biological fate of the species” (Foucault, 2008b, p. 15).

In education, according to analyzes by Ball, Maguire and Braun (2016), governmentality constitutes a system of regulation. It is a compliance movement, a coupling that manufactures bodies submitted, practiced (Foucault, 2014) and specific capacities. It is a performative systematization that aligns the microcosm of classroom interactions and the aspirations of global levels of patterns and achievements. In

Foucault's terms, we can think of neoliberal-based curriculum policies as government techniques, as regular control, as disciplinary instruments in the general and essential transformation of society, as biopolitics.

In these terms, taking the notion of governmentality and political networks to discuss the nuances of the most recent Brazilian curricular policies, provided an opportunity to explain the practices that led to the emergence of the production of technologies and techniques that constitute the specific principles of the functioning of contemporary global educational policy, or global uniformity that tries to provide the conditions for the neoliberalization of education and to govern education, subjects and populations.

Thus, it is possible to say that such policies are crossed by a neoliberal governmentality of educational basis, that is, governmentality being mobilized through educational public policies, which presume the creation of consensus, the conformation of everyone to a universal idea of things, the promotion of an alleged equalization in access to opportunities or, in a way, the remaining of everyone in the neoliberal economic game, since, it is considered, that the rules are the same for everyone.

Thus, curricular policies, as mechanisms of neoliberal governmentality, continue to act as a point of contact between the economic and the social. These are performative political technologies that denounce, as it were, a convergence of public sector institutions with the private sector. It is on the basis of all this that, according to Ball (2004), lies the political myth of efficiency, competence and quality, which praises the supremacy of private sector management in partnership with the State. It is the advance of neoliberal rationality that is projected through public policies produced in a network of governance policies, towards the "[...] fulfillment of goals, improvement of performance and maximization of the budget" (Ball, 2004, p. 1117).

Transitional considerations

The challenge of thinking about the game put in the spaces of production of curricular policies in Brazil pushes us to new configurations of theoretical-methodological possibilities that allow us to glimpse other perspectives, which can no longer be succumbed to by the invariability of predefined thoughts for historical moments of changing rationalities.

Contemporary political reason leads society to experience abuses and excesses of power, but also supposed profitable benefits and contributions to certain groups. I am speaking for this reason of neoliberal rationality, of a depoliticized state, of a governance elaborated from business principles and subjects produced and conducted by market demands and disciplines, as well as by morality.

It is a whole epistemological, philosophical, social, cultural and economic complex that is used to mobilize policies – curriculum policies – as instruments of conduct, production of human capital and development of financial capital. Policies, therefore, are power techniques built on networks, and, for this reason, mechanisms of neoliberal governmentality.

In this sense, they can be read through the lens of governmentality and the epistemological of political governance networks. By exposing the question that guided this debate, which asks whether it is possible to mobilize the notions of governmentality and political governance networks as theoretical-methodological potentialities in research on curriculum policies, the answer is affirmative.

Such notions, in view of this, authorize thoughts about recent Brazilian curriculum policies as products of political governance networks, as tools of neoliberal rationality aligned with an economicized world project in which the politician does not fit. Thus, the various forms of existence are refuted, and the appreciation of a market subject takes precedence. A subject formed, trained and programmed to generate profit, to occupy certain social positions, and not to question the power that affects his body.

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