

## The expansion of neoconservatism in Brazilian education\*

Iana Gomes de Lima<sup>1</sup>

ORCID: 0000-0002-6386-7248

Álvaro Moreira Hypolito<sup>2</sup>

ORCID: 0000-0003-1487-0413

### Abstract

Considering that, in recent years, a conservative wave is being observed in Brazil that accompanies conservative movements around the world, it becomes important to study in a deeper way the neoconservative movement in the Brazilian educational scenario. This is the main purpose of this article. To do so, initially, a characterization of neoconservatism is made, based on studies by authors dealing with the US context. This first section also presents a brief history about the emergence of this movement. Soon after, some reasons are pointed out that justify the need for analyses on neoconservatives in Brazil. The article also has examples of some actions in the educational field that can be characterized as neoconservatives. We analyze the Non-Partisan School (ESP) movement, its main guidelines in relation to education, and the discussions about the National Curricular Common Base (BNCC), especially the issues related to what has been called gender ideology. The ESP and the BNCC are examined based on the theoretical conceptualization developed throughout the article, in articulation with the patterns and characteristics of the Brazilian neoconservative movement. It is concluded that, in the last years, there is a significant advance of neoconservative articulations in the political field and in the educational field. There is an insistent and intense action of neoconservatives in the elaboration of important documents of the Brazilian educational legislation.

### Keywords

Neoconservatism – Conservative modernization – Non-partisan school – National curricular common base.

\* English version by Sílvia Iacovacci.

**1-** Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. Contact: iana\_glima@yahoo.com.br.

**2-** Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPEL), Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. Contact: alvaro.hypolito@gmail.com.



DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1678-463420194519091>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type BY-NC.

In the last years, a conservative wave, present in different areas, lived in Brazil. Some authors have published studies that indicate the presence of actions of neoconservative groups in the Brazilian scenario (BARROCO, 2011, 2015; MOLL, 2015a). There is a growing movement of right-wing groups in Brazil, among them movements connected to neoliberalism and neoconservatism. Regarding neoconservatism, Moll (2015a) says that it is possible to verify the force of this movement when right-wing groups attack, for example, newspapers and television stations for presenting “some progressive but limited positions on gender issues, decriminalization drugs, abortion, religious ecumenism, racism, and the defense of the environment.” Another example brought by the author, who demonstrates the existence of a neoconservative movement in Brazil, is related to political representatives in the National Congress. Even though few politicians present themselves as neoconservatives in the Brazilian Congress, it is notorious that the positions of many politicians approach neoconservative ideas. As an example of neoconservative politicians, Moll (2015a) quotes Eduardo Cunha (PMDB-RJ)<sup>3</sup> and Jair Bolsonaro (PSL-RJ). It shows how they defend a policy of austerity and adopt, in the words of Moll (2015a), “a moralistic discourse based even on strict Christian (not to say fundamentalist) presuppositions.” He concludes his text with the statement that it is necessary to expand the studies on “neoconservatism and neoliberalism in Brazil, including as a result of transnational processes, to thoroughly analyze the divergences and convergences in order to understand them as world perceptions that seek to become hegemonic.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the need to study in a deeper way what the neoconservative movement is, what its characteristics are, and what forms it assumes in the current Brazilian context seems evident. For this purpose, in the first part of this article, the aim is to characterize neoconservatives based on the contributions of authors who study the American context, in order to give a historical sense for its emergence. The second part points out some reasons that justify the need for analyses on neoconservatives, specifically in relation to the Brazilian educational context. In this same section, we present some examples of actions that can be characterized as neoconservatives and point out how complex it is to define this group in Brazil.

## **When does neoconservatism arise?**

Several authors point out that the neoconservative movement emerged in the post-World War II period, more precisely around the 1960s and 1970s (MOLL, 2010, 2015b; APPLE, 2000; CLARKE; NEWMAN, 1997; AFONSO, 1998; BARROCO, 2015). Neoconservatives

---

**3-** This federal deputy, currently imprisoned for acts of corruption that he has never seen before, although expressing conservative ideas, holds no value in terms of ethical and moral aspects, sometimes present in certain conservative groups, including the fact that such Brazilian neoconservatives, differently of the most original groups, do not despise the state and still make abusive use of the state apparatus, both to supply their own private interests and to devise conservative public policies.

**4-** The conservative agenda in education was the focus of the 11th Regional Scientific Meeting of the Anped Sul, held in the city of Curitiba from July 24 to 27, 2016. In the GT-Curriculum, Prof. Álvaro Hypolito presented the work titled Conservative Agenda and Policies of Curriculum, in which he mentioned several actions in the Brazilian educational field that present neoconservative characteristics, such as many of the Apostille systems and initiatives of the Non-Partisan School, with strong expression in the formulation of a conservative national curriculum – BNCC. The BNCC is a good example to demonstrate the convergence of neoliberal and neoconservative interests.

are one of the groups that make up the New Right, a concept that has come to be used in American<sup>5</sup> and European literature to designate a movement that began around the 1960s (CLARKE; NEWMAN, 1997; AFONSO, 1998, 2003). The New Right is an alliance between neoconservatives and neoliberals; central to the dismantling of the welfare state and to the creation of a new way of administering the state during the 1970 crisis in the central countries to capitalism, such an alliance has effectively begun to consolidate. Apple (2000) brings to the scene four groups that, for him, constitute the alliance of the New Right in the United States: neoliberals, neoconservatives, authoritarian populists, and the new professional middle class. The neoliberals constitute the leadership of the New Right and represent the group that is concerned with the political-economic orientation tied to the notion of the market. Neoconservatives are those who define the values of the past as better than the present and fight for cultural traditions. Authoritarian populists are generally middle class and working-class groups that distrust the state and care about security, family, knowledge, and traditional values. In a more recent work, Apple (2013) claims that authoritarian populists are significantly shaped by evangelical groups. Lastly, the group of the new professional middle class is concerned with social mobility, and this segment “may not fully agree with these other groups, but [their] professional interests and progress depend on the expansion of delivery systems and the search for efficiency and management procedures” (APPLE, 2000, p. 32).

During the 1970 crisis, the New Right made harsh criticism of the welfare state. For some groups (such as neoconservatives, neoliberals, and the new middle class), this administrative model of state privileged only the minority groups, as such groups had made important gains in terms of equality and social rights, rather than favoring groups that were truly worthy of such benefits and constitute the true population of a particular nation (APPLE, 1999). Moll (2010, p. 76) corroborates this analysis by stating that:

Many Americans saw the economic crisis of the 1970s as a consequence of the “social degeneracy” resulting from the corruption of Watergate, the New Deal, the Great Society, the social movements, and the transformations of the 1960s, to the moment of crisis affirming the need to restore society in search of fulfilling its destiny of redemption. Thus, values such as freedom, autonomy, progress, morality, individualism, and unlimited opportunities were taken as natural characteristics, in contrast to humanism, multiculturalism, collectivism, environmentalism, liberalism, in short, transformations, and social issues of the 1960s. In the minds of many Americans, therefore, it was necessary to overcome the crisis by restoring the “true values” of the United States.

What is quite evident in the above quotation is the idea of restoration of true values. With the 1970 crisis, there was an understanding by conservative groups that the civil and

---

**5-** Considering that the neoconservative movement has a great importance in the US scenario, we chose, in this article, to make use, centrally, of references that indicate how such a movement emerged in the United States and how its ideas came to be diffused in that context. We have the understanding that it is possible to glimpse in Brazil many of the characteristics of US neoconservatism, as will be discussed later in this article. However, we would like to emphasize that we believe that neoconservative ideas are now present in many countries, such as France, England, and Spain (mainly through xenophobia) (MCCOWAN, 2006). However, the scope of this article, as from the beginning, is not intended to address world neoconservatism.

social rights movements –marked in the 1960s– had provoked social degeneracy and had to take up values that were family, morality, and the individual.<sup>6</sup> Thus, “the intellectuals who built the ideological bases of neoconservatism have rescued from traditionalism the moral emphasis that, from the 1960s, served to attack morally the welfare state and liberal social movements” (MOLL, 2010, p. 67).

The neoconservative’s diagnosis of the 1970 crisis was that it was necessary to organize society from other values and that the “greatest danger of the 20th century was the growing role of the state as organizer of social life” (MOLL, 2010, p. 68). Neoconservatives thus criticized state intervention in people’s lives by stating that the presence of the state posed a moral and economic danger because it despised what has always been seen as one of the great American values: individual freedom. For the neoconservatives, “individual liberty was a fundamental and moral American value, responsible for the production and wealth of the nation” (MOLL, 2010, p. 68).

It is important to emphasize that neoconservative criticism regarding state intervention in the economic sphere and the valorization of individuals are aspects that bring together and make possible an alliance between neoconservatives and neoliberals. Moll (2015b) states that it was the socialist Michael Harrington who coined the term “neoconservatism”, referring to a new type of conservatism, which in some points started with principles similar to neoliberals. For the author, the neoconservatives, “inspired by classical liberalism, believed that government interference in the economy and social programs generated inflation, indebtedness, and losses to productivity” (MOLL, 2015b, p. 56). Barroco, who also makes use of the term neoconservative, corroborates this analysis and states that this was a group that emerged from the 1970s world crisis of capitalism, when “conservatism was reanalyzed, incorporating economic principles of neoliberalism, without giving up the their ideals and their specific way of understanding reality” (BARROCO, 2015, p. 624). Thus, for the author, neoconservatism then presents itself as a dominant form of conservative apology of the capitalist order, combating the social state and social rights, aiming at a society without restrictions to the market and reserving to the state the coercive function of violently repressing all forms of opposition to the social order and traditional customs.

Still in relation to the Welfare State, Moll (2015b) emphasizes that the neoconservatives saw two great problems with the interference of the government. The first is that, because social programs ensure economic security, in the neoconservative view, this discouraged work and innovation, which in turn affected productivity and weakened the country. Thus, neoconservatives understood, as well as neoliberals, that it was necessary to “reduce government expenditures; increase the interest rate; deregulating the economy; and to institute a regressive tax system” (MOLL, 2015b, p. 56). The second problem concerned the state’s interference in the economy and in the provision of social programs, which generated the search for an equality that, in the neoconservative perspective, was perverted. In addition, another criticism of the intervention of the state was that in this

---

**6-** It was during this period that the right-of-choice ideas, which are at the basis of Charter Schools and Vouchers (education voucher), emerged. When desegregation of schools occurred in the southern states of the United States, many white families refused to take their children to attend the same schools as black children, as Milton Friedman describes in his paper, “The Role of Government in Education” (see Brooke, 2012).

way the responsibility for social welfare was removed from the family, the church, and the community, because for the neoconservatives these social segments must be the truly responsible for social harmony. Thus, in a neoconservative view, “The welfare state should be combated, as it replaced the moral, communal, and family ties by the state and, as a result, promoted parasitism and laziness” (MOLL, 2010, p. 76).

In this crisis period of the 1970s, programs aimed at, for example, single mothers attacked for supposedly encouraging irresponsibility by encouraging independent procreation of marriage. From a neoconservative religious discourse, the idea was that women should “be kind and obedient housewives, thus ensuring the morale, stability of the family, and society, and would be rewarded for the safety and protection of their husbands” (MOLL, 2010, p. 76). Abortion and homosexuality have also come under constant attack from neocon religious movements. Barroco (2015, p. 624) points out that the neoconservative movement gained even more force in the “context of the implantation of neoliberal policies, presenting itself as a political program (from the Reagan administration) sustained by the defense of neoliberalism, militarism, and values [of] traditional family and [the] religious.”

In addition to these aspects, there is a nationalism reinforced by the American dream, expressed in the rhythm of Trump’s Make America Great Again. In the context of the 1960s and 1970s, the United States faced many internal conflicts because of the wars in Korea and Vietnam, in which an identified enemy, which was communism, was fighting. The defeat in both wars brought important sequels and sparked the confrontation between pacifists/counterculture movements and nationalist and conservative forces. The recent neoconservative wave is still a convergence to rescue a lost tradition that urgently needs to be recovered. The need for another opponent or enemy becomes crucial to nourish the neoconservative feeling. If there is no more communism, there are Chicanos, Latinos, Islamists, and new African immigrants.

The purpose of this study was to understand the context in which the neoconservative movement emerges, a context of crisis in which different groups build alliances and begin to criticize hard the welfare state. In relation to the neoconservatives, it is possible to perceive that this group criticizes, centrally, to the interventionism state in the economic and familiar (moral) scope. Such criticisms are related to the specific characteristics of said group, which will be addressed in the sequence.

### **After all, what do the neoconservatives defend?**

Moll (2010) points out that the neoconservative ideology began to be constructed from ideas originating, centrally, from two existing currents: old conservatism and libertarianism. These assumptions were rescued and began to be reconstructed, and the novelty was established by the fusion of these very different currents (MOLL, 2010). According to Moll (2010, p. 67), there are profound differences between libertarians and old conservatives:

Libertarians understand that the problem of the world is the lack of individual freedom, while the old conservatives argue that totalitarianism is the fruit of too much individualism. For libertarians, individuals are the only ones who can define their own goals, while for the old conservatives the definition of any goal requires the acceptance of social beliefs and ties. The two positions also differ on the notion of society. For libertarians, society is a contractual relationship between individuals that can be undone and has nothing transcendent to guarantee it, whereas old conservatives believe that society is a community that shares a series of common moral values and institutions that bind individuals to each other. Above all, from the point of view of economics, libertarians defended the virtues of capitalism founded on a free market, but for the old conservatives this represented precisely the degeneration of traditional capitalism.

What can be perceived, through the above quote, is that libertarians and old conservatives have quite different assumptions. Thus, as Moll (2010) emphasizes, neoconservatism is formed from these contradictory elements, so that the main novelty of the movement in relation to the old conservatism is the incorporation of libertarian ideas, because these were very close to neoliberal presuppositions, mainly by focusing on the individual and the free economy. Thus, at the same time that neoconservatives incorporate the principles of the old conservatives, they affirm the centrality of society as a place of social beliefs and ties, based on a series of common moral values; they also defend a focus on the individual and their ability to choose.

It should be noted that, although old conservatives and neoconservatives diverge in several respects –the former criticized the latter for their lack of concern for principles and traditions; neoconservatives did not accept the prevalence of moral tradition, or the rejection of modernities, aspects defended by conservatives– both groups “nurtured an antirevolutionary sentiment and opposed the counterculture movements and liberal social programs of the 1960s” (MOLL, 2010, p. 68). The author points out that three intellectuals–William Buckley Jr., Frank Meyer, and M. Stanton Evans– were responsible for fusing libertarian language and traditional conservative language. According to these three intellectuals, “liberty in the libertarian sense was impossible without a moral prerogative and a transcendental goal, and moral virtue was impossible without freedom, for without the possibility of choice the state would impose its virtues and their objectives” (MOLL, 2010, p. 67).

Apple (2003) points out characteristic aspects of neoconservatives. For him, neoconservatives are based on

[...] a romantic view of the past, a past in which “true knowledge” and morality reigned supreme, where people “knew their place” and where stable communities, guided by a natural order, the damage of society. (APPLE, 2003, p. 57).

The author cites some educational policies proposed by the group in the United States: mandatory curricula, national assessments, return to a Western tradition, patriotism, and conservative perspectives on moral character education. In addition, neoconservatives attack multiculturalism because they see the other as a danger to traditional values (APPLE, 2003). Michael Apple further points out that one of the demands of neoconservatives has been an increasingly strong state to regulate teacher action, moving from “permitted autonomy” to

“regulated autonomy” as teachers “were highly standardized, rationalized, and ‘policed’” (APPLE, 2003, p. 62).

It is important to note that neoconservatives, in the context of the United States, establish alliances with neoliberals, as well as with populist-authoritarian religious fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals (APPLE, 2003). It should be noted that these groups, although they carry out particular movements, do not act in isolation. They establish alliances, even if some of their interests are often contradictory.

Authoritarian populists base their positions on education and social policy on certain views of biblical authority, such as Christian morality, gender roles, and family roles. Apple (2003) argues that the authoritarian populist platform includes questions regarding gender, sexuality, family, and what should be legitimate learning and curriculum in schools. In the United States, according to the author, this group has put pressure on publishers producing textbooks to change the content and important aspects of educational policy. An example of the authoritarian-populist educational agenda is the education of their children at home (APPLE, 2013). Homeschooling is based on the premise that state interference in family life is a danger. It is related to the fear of multiculturalism, which, from the perspective of the authoritarian populists, represents another danger, because their children are forced to live with the different and often immoral.

There are common interests between neoconservatives and authoritarian populists: the idea is to put questions about authority, morality, family, church, and decency at the center of the curriculum, because such aspects alone could overcome the moral decay so evident to them in current days. In the words of Apple (2003, p. 61): “The leadership of ‘education reform’ is increasingly under the dominance of conservative discourses around a ‘good standard of quality,’ ‘excellence,’ ‘evaluation,’ and so on.”

Much of what Moll (2010) calls neoconservative is what Apple (2003) calls authoritarian populists. Moll presents a chain of neoconservatives he calls religious and moral neoconservatism, which grew in the 1970s. He states that this took place in the American context mainly through conservative evangelical churches. Such growth occurred significantly after evangelicals began to use the media to spread their ideas and effective political participation in the 1970s (MOLL, 2010). Political participation implied denouncing communism and what was considered a communist conspiracy in schools and government programs. “Religious men and women have taken up the 19th-century view that they should put Christian values in the face of crisis and social issues in politics” (MOLL, 2010, p. 76).

## **The growth of groups with neoconservative ideas in the Brazilian scenario**

In this section, through some examples, the growth of groups with neoconservative ideas in the Brazilian scenario is pointed out. It is, in particular, how much such ideas have been disseminated in the educational field.<sup>7</sup>

---

**7-** In exemplifying the issues related to neoconservatism in the Brazilian educational context, we chose, in this article, to focus on gender issues. We are aware, however, that neoconservative ideas are also present in relation to ethnic-racial relations and to questions of class and nationality, among others.

Miguel (2016) brings important contributions on the growth of conservative ideas in Brazil. According to him, it is possible to perceive, as of 2010, an advance, in the public debate, of openly conservative voices. The author argues that, currently,

[...] there is a significant presence of discourses in which inequality is exalted as a corollary of “meritocracy” and in which attempts to undo traditional hierarchies are framed as a crime against nature. In these discourses, the old idea of human rights also gains a new legitimacy as a formula that grants undue protection to people with antisocial behavior. (MIGUEL, 2016, p. 592).

In the Brazilian case, the author identifies three currents of conservative ideas: libertarianism, religious fundamentalism, and the old anticommunism. According to him, libertarianism defends the smallest possible state and understands that any situation that originates in market mechanisms is fair in itself, however unequal it may seem. The author affirms that this position is defended by private foundations, as is the case of the Millennium Institute, which, according to Miguel (2016, p. 593), is “the main think tank of the Brazilian right created in 2006 and financed by national companies and transnational.” In addition, these ideas are also defended by the great Brazilian press, having as one of its main defenders the journalist Rodrigo Constantino<sup>8</sup>.

Religious fundamentalism, in turn, has become a force in Brazil since the 1990s. Miguel (2016, p. 593) makes an important warning when he states that it is wrong to speak of this current only in “‘because’ the expression not only ignores differences between the Protestant denominations but leaves out the important presence of the most conservative sector of the Catholic Church.” According to the author, fundamentalism presupposes that there is a revealed truth, which nullifies any possibility of debate. Those who subscribe to fundamentalist religious ideas oppose “the right to abortion, inclusive understandings of the family entity and policies to combat homophobia, among other issues” (MIGUEL, 2016, p. 593). It is important to note that fundamentalist parliamentarians make alliances with different conservative forces in Congress, such as landowners and armaments. Miguel (2016) points out as an example of fundamentalists Pastor Silas Malafaia<sup>9</sup>.

Finally, anticommunism, according to Miguel (2016), has gained new clout in Latin America and Brazil, with the threat becoming Bolivarianism –doctrine of the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez– and the Forum of Sao Paulo, conference of Latin American and Caribbean parties of center-left and left. The Forum, based on anticommunist assumptions, assumed “the appearance of a conspiracy to dominate the subcontinent” (MIGUEL, 2016, p. 593). The author also points out that the Workers’ Party, when it was in the federal government, was also presented as an incarnation of communism in Brazil, which ended up

---

**8-** Rodrigo Constantino is president of the Council of the Liberal Institute and founding member of the Millennium Institute. He has been working in the financial sector since 1997. He holds a degree in economics from Pontifícia Universidade Católica (PUC-RJ), with an master of business administration degree in finance from Instituto Brasileiro de Mercado de Capitais. Constantino was a columnist for *Veja* and is currently a columnist for important Brazilian media, such as *IstoÉ* magazine and *Valor Econômico* newspapers, *O Globo*, and *Gazeta do Povo*. He openly defends the ideas of the ESP movement.

**9-** Silas Malafaia is a member of the Christian Social Party (PSC), and he defends ideas of Non-Partisan School movement.

“creating a remarkable overlap between anticommunism and antipetism” (MIGUEL, 2016, p. 594). He points out that Olavo de Carvalho<sup>10</sup> is one of the voices of this position.

It is important to note that the division between the three currents mentioned above is merely didactic, but it is possible, in Brazilian reality, to find representatives who fit into more than one chain. Miguel (2016) exemplifies this question through Olavo de Carvalho, who represents the current of anticommunism and is also a fundamentalist Catholic. Olavo de Carvalho, in addition, is related to the movement Non-Partisan School (ESP)<sup>11</sup> for being one of the thinkers who base this movement, as well as one of the propagators of its ideas. It is considered important to treat ESP because this is a movement that demonstrates the growth of neoconservative ideas in education.

Non-Partisan School,<sup>12</sup> as defined in its own sources, is a “joint initiative of students and parents concerned about the degree of political-ideological contamination of Brazilian schools at all levels: from elementary to higher education” and “an informal, independent association, not for profit and without any kind of political, ideological, or partisan”<sup>13</sup> connection. The aim of the group is to stop “an organized army of militants transgressed by teachers [who] prevails in the freedom of teaching and the secret curtain of the classrooms to impose on them their own vision of the world.” This movement was founded in 2004, by the lawyer Miguel Nagib.

According to Miguel (2016, p. 595), ESP “remained in obscurity until the beginning of the decade of 2010, when it became a frequent voice in debates about education in Brazil. His program was embraced by all groups of the Brazilian right.” The main banner of the ESP is the fight against ideological indoctrination, which, according to the defenders of the movement, is constantly carried out by teachers in Brazilian classrooms. However,

The growing importance of MESP in the public debate occurs when its project converges to another part of the conservative agenda: the fight against the so-called “gender ideology.” Earlier, the idea of a “Non-Partisan School” focused mainly on the fear of “Marxist indoctrination,” something that had been present since the period of the military dictatorship. The fear of discussing gender roles has grown with initiatives to combat homophobia and sexism in schools and has been championed by conservative religious groups as a priority. By merging it with its original agenda, MESP shifted the discussion to a seemingly “moral” (as opposed to “political”) terrain and began to frame it in terms of a dispute between schooling and family authority over children. (MIGUEL, 2016, p. 595-596).

**10-** Olavo de Carvalho is a writer, lecturer, essayist, journalist, and Brazilian philosopher. He worked in magazines and journals, including vehicles such as *Folha de São Paulo*, *Planeta*, *Bravo! First Reading*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *Jornal da Tarde*, *O Globo*, *Época*, and *Zero Hora*. It also defends ESP ideas.

**11-** The Non-Partisan School was the theme of the roundtable entitled, “Teaching Work and Non-Partisan School,” at the IX Brazilian Meeting of Redrawing, held in the city of Campinas from November 8 to 10, 2017. At this roundtable, Prof. Iana Gomes de Lima presented the work, “The Network of the Non-Partisan School,” in which it showed a network containing different actors related to the movement, among them, Olavo de Carvalho, Rodrigo Constantino, and the Millennium Institute, already mentioned in this article.

**12-** We highlight two recently published important books on the movement without school: the ideology of the movement Non-Partisan School: 20 authors disassemble the discourse, organized by the Educational Action (2016); and Non-Partisan School: sphinx that threatens education and the Brazilian society, organized by Gaudêncio Frigotto (2017).

**13-** Information about the No-Match School was taken from the movement’s website (<http://www.escolasempartido.org/>) and its official Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/escolasempartidooficial/>). Accessed on: January 26, 2018.

From the above excerpt, it can be seen that the ESP begins to act, thus, centrally, through two currents: religious fundamentalism and anticommunism. One cannot forget, however, that ESP also makes use of the current of libertarianism when it has as its main motto “my children, my rules,” arguing that those responsible for the education of children are the parents and that, therefore, the state –and so the schools– should not educate, but rather teach content. There is, therefore, the idea of a smaller possible state that does not interfere with private life.

The issue of gender ideology was the banner of evangelicals and Catholics, who worked together and obtained a ban on the gender theme of the National Education Plan (PNE) and state and municipal plans. “During the appraisal of education plans, it was common to see chambers or assemblies taken by nuns, side by side with pastors of neo-Pentecostal churches, pressuring deputies and councilmen” (MIGUEL, 2016, p. 599). As already stated, the issue of gender ideology was not the initial banner of ESP, but this movement saw in this defense an opportunity, which gave it “allied weight, a capillarity with which neither could dream and a discourse with popular resonance much more immediate.” In the words of the author: “The confluence was facilitated, thanks to the work of propagandists of the extreme right, in particular those aligned with Olavo de Carvalho, for whom the dissolution of conventional sexual morality is a step of communist strategy” (MIGUEL, 2016, p. 601).

Non-Partisan School is a movement that has been very present in the Brazilian educational scenario (MIGUEL, 2016; MACEDO, 2017). An example of this is the number of bills that are being processed by the National Congress, Legislative Assemblies, and the City Council and whose purpose is to make the movement’s bill a law. Miguel (2016) identified, in the year 2016, seven bills underway in the National Congress and more than 10 projects in state legislatures. Macedo (2017) corroborates the observation about the dimension that ESP has taken in the Brazilian educational scenario when affirming that these projects that process in the Senate and in the House propose to change the Law of Directives and Bases of the National Education (LDB) to insert an ESP program. Attempts to modify the LDB –the law that governs Brazilian education– constitute a serious issue, which shows the force that such movement and thus neoconservative ideas are having in Brazil.

Neoconservative ideas can also be seen in other scenarios. This is the case of combating gender ideology with regard to the National Curricular Common Base (BNCC). An analysis of subjects included and excluded from the BNCC confirms the understanding that there is a growth of neoconservative ideas in relation to Brazilian education. According to Macedo (2017), after the release of the second version of Base, a new set of demands, called by the author of conservative demands, was strengthened. The author further states that these demands were present throughout the process, “but they gained prominence after Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment, when ESP became one of the MEC’s interlocutors” (MACEDO, 2017, p. 514).<sup>14</sup> Macedo (2017) identifies four guidelines that the ESP has demanded in relation to

---

**14-** The interlocation between the MEC and ESP occurred, centrally, after the appointment of Mendonça Filho as Minister of Education (Macedo, 2017; Miguel, 2016). An example of such interlocation can be seen with the appointment of Adolfo Sachsida, an economist at the Institute of Applied Economic Research, as special adviser to the education minister. However, hours later, the post was canceled before Sachsida took office. Sachsida openly defends in the social networks the ESP movement. For more information, check <http://educacao.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,em-um-dia-mec-nomeia-e-exonera-apoiador-so-escola-sem-part10000062382>. Accessed on: January 2, 2018.

the BNCC: (1) separation of public and private space, transferring education to the family's private space, which would fit all the moral and ethical formation of children; (2) against the leftist ideological bias that would support the document submitted to the public consultation; (3) against cultural diversity in curricula; and (4) against gender ideology in curricula. However, it is not only the ESP that has proposed conservative demands in relation to the BNCC. According to Silva, Pires, and Pereira (2016, p. 12), the current Minister of Education, Mendonça Filho, intervened in the production process of the Base, modifying its schedule of execution, a separate discussion, and "above all, changing the interlocutors, to include (more) representatives from the private sector and proponents of anachronistic proposals." The authors cite as examples of such proposals the ESP and the evangelical banking, which present themselves against the discussions of gender and the rights of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, for example.

The issue of gender ideology generated a great deal of debate about the BNCC, and in its third version, presented in April 2017, no mention was made of the gender issue. Still in relation to the BNCC, it is possible to emphasize that in its third version questions concerning the religious teaching also had been excluded. However, the Supreme Federal Court decided in September 2017 that religious teaching should be confessional; that is, teachers could promote beliefs in class. In November 2017, Eduardo Deschamps, President of the National Council of Education, and Rossieli Soares da Silva, Secretary of Basic Education of the MEC, stated<sup>15</sup> that there was consensus that the final version of BNCC will mention religious teaching, but that had not been defined how this would happen.

The main objective of this article was to provide elements for a better understanding of the progress of neoconservatism in Brazil, especially in Brazilian education, as well as to bring to a debate some aspects about the origins of this type of thought and to show how neoconservatism articulates with the so-called New Right Alliance.

Thus, neoconservatism, in its version of the last quarter of the last century, has been shown to be rapidly associated with the interests of other groups, and before the 1990s, the constitution of Conservative Modernization or New Right, according to Apple (2003), articulates conservative cultural traditions with neoliberal economic interests and conservative religious interests, to impose the neoliberal and neoconservative agenda on education and the definitions of the role of the state.

This conservative restoration has been confirmed as a joint that is constituted in several regions of the planet, in leading countries such as the United States, England, and Australia, among others. The advancement of neoconservative values can now be felt globally.

In Brazil, this progress has been made, as has been shown previously, in articulations in the political field—religious and evangelical groups in the parliament—and in the educational field, with the numerous bills of municipal, state, and federal laws presented, as well as in the ESP movement in various spheres of interference. In addition to localized actions, there has been a broader interest in action and definition in the educational agenda, with an insistent and intense participation of neoconservatives in the elaboration and definitions of PNE

**15-** For more details, see <https://g1.globo.com/educacao/noticia/conselho-analisa-mais-de-500-sugestoes-antes-de-fechar-a-versao-final-da-base-nacional-curricular-que-sera-votada-em-dezembro.ghtml>. Accessed on: January 4, 2018.

and BNCC. The curriculum field is a disputed field. Disputes around BNCC have made clear the importance and interest that conservative and neoliberal groups have expressed about curriculum definitions and the country's educational agenda.

After the first round of the 2018 elections, the growth and coverage of neoconservatism in all social spheres are very evident, which demands a great deal of attention to the problems that will be faced and possible setbacks that surround our country. The articulation of the conservative groups of different parties in the Brazilian parliament, denominated by the media as the bull, bible, and bullet counter, shows that agrarian, religious, agribusiness, and fascist groups have expanded their political representation and will try to interfere in the main social, cultural, and educational settings.

At the end of this article, it is important to emphasize that the theme is too crucial for the recent and long-term future, because it implies definitions that are decisive for the constitution of what schools and society should be encouraged to produce. Neoconservative globalism continues to advance and standardize education through evaluation systems, curriculum reforms and global examinations, and standardization that allows more direct action by neoconservative and neoliberal organizations to secure their interests.

## References

AÇÃO EDUCATIVA ASSESSORIA, PESQUISA E INFORMAÇÃO (Org.). **A ideologia do movimento Escola sem Partido**: 20 autores desmontam o discurso. São Paulo: Ação Educativa, 2016.

AFONSO, Almerindo Janela. **Políticas educativas e avaliação educacional**: a uma análise sociológica da reforma educativa em Portugal (1985-1995). Braga: IEP: CEEP: Universidade do Minho, 1998.

APPLE, Michael W. **Conhecimento oficial**: a educação democrática numa era conservadora. Tradução de Maria Isabel Edelweiss Bujes. 2. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1999.

APPLE, Michael W. **Educando à direita**: mercados, padrões, Deus e desigualdade. Tradução de Dinah de Abreu Azevedo. São Paulo: Cortez: Instituto Paulo Freire, 2003.

APPLE, Michael W. Fazendo o trabalho de Deus: ensino domiciliar e trabalho de gênero. In: APPLE, Michael W.; BALL, Stephen J.; GANDIN, Luís Armando (Org.). **Sociologia da educação**: análise internacional. Tradução de Cristina Monteiro. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2013. p. 166-176.

APPLE, Michael W. **Política cultural e educação**. Tradução de José do Amaral Ferreira. São Paulo: Cortez, 2000.

BARROCO, Maria Lúcia S. Barbárie e neoconservadorismo: os desafios do projeto ético-político. **Serviço Social & Sociedade**, São Paulo, n. 106, p. 205-218, abr./jun. 2011.

BARROCO, Maria Lúcia S. Não passarão! Ofensiva neoconservadora e serviço social. **Serviço Social & Sociedade**, São Paulo, n. 124, p. 623-636, out./dez. 2015.

BROOKE, Nigel (Org.). **Marcos históricos na reforma da educação**. Belo Horizonte: Fino Traço, 2012.

CLARKE, John; NEWMAN, Janet. **The managerial state: power, politics and ideology in the remaking of Social Welfare**. London: Sage, 1997.

FRIGOTTO, Gaudêncio (Org.). **Escola “sem” partido: esfinge que ameaça a educação e a sociedade brasileira**. Rio de Janeiro: UERJ: LPP, 2017.

MACEDO, Elizabeth. As demandas conservadoras do movimento Escola Sem Partido e a Base Nacional Curricular Comum. **Educação & Sociedade**, Campinas, v. 38, n. 139, p. 507-524, abr./jun. 2017.

McCOWAN, Tristan. Educating citizens for participatory democracy: a case study of local government education policy in Pelotas, Brazil. **International Journal of Educational Development**, n. 26, p. 456-470, 2006.

MIGUEL, Luis Felipe. Da “doutrinação marxista” à “ideologia de gênero”: Escola Sem Partido e as leis da mordaza no parlamento brasileiro. **Direito & Práxis**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 7, n. 15, p. 590-621, 2016.

MOLL, Roberto. **Diferenças entre neoliberalismo e neoconservadorismo: duas faces da mesma moeda?** [S. l.]: Unesp, 2015a. Disponível em: <<http://unesp.br/semdiplomacia/opiniao/2015/43>>. Acesso em: 11 maio 2016.

MOLL, Roberto. **Imaginando o “outro” e a nação nas relações internacionais: commentary magazine, the New Republic e o intervencionismo dos Estados Unidos na Nicarágua e El Salvador (1977-1992)**. 2015. 275 f. Tese (Doutorado em Relações Internacionais) – Programa San Tiago Dantas de Pós-Graduação em Relações Internacionais, UNESP/UNICAMP/PUC-SP, São Paulo, 2015b.

MOLL, Roberto. **Reaganetion: a nação e o nacionalismo (neo)conservador nos Estados Unidos (1981-1988)**. 2010. 265 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em História) – Programa de Pós-Graduação História, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 2010.

SILVA, Maurício Roberto da; PIRES, Giovani De Lorenzi; PEREIRA, Rogério Santos. A Base Nacional Comum Curricular da educação básica em tempos de neoconservadorismo e de “neoliberalismo que saiu do armário”; mas também de tempos de resistência: Fora Temer!!! **Motrivivência**, v. 28, n. 48, p. 7-14, set. 2016.

*Reviewed on: January 30th, 2018*

*Received on: September 26th, 2018*

*Approved on: October 30th, 2018*

**Iana Gomes de Lima** is assistant professor of the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) and collaborator of the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação da Universidade da Região de Joinville (Univille). Graduated in Pedagogy in UFRGS, master and doctor in the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação in the same university.

**Álvaro Moreira Hypolito** is professor of the Department of Education of the Graduate Program in Education at the Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPEl). Pedagogue, graduated in Arts and Master in Education from the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) and doctor in curriculum in the University of Wisconsin-Madison. CNPq researcher.