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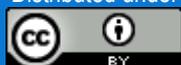
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## The Mercantilization Process of Higher Education in Brazil and the Denial of Human Formation: A Critical Analysis from István Mészáros

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### ABSTRACT

The mercantilization of Higher education is the appropriation of this level of education as a commodity manipulated according to its exchange value for the extraction of added value and consequent accumulation of capital. In this way, it is possible to conceive of it as na unfolding of factors that originate at the interface of the current productive order. This phenomenon expresses a reductionist and precarious conception of education, which distorts and compromises the social function that the educational complex plays in human formation. In the light of Historical Dialectical Materialism, this research has a bibliographic and documentary character, using books, articles and official documents. The results demonstrate that the process of commercialization of Higher education in Brazil is historically linked to the expansion of this level of education, based on the reforms of the Brazilian State in the educational field, showing its subordinate position in relation to the demands imposed by capital; and that the role of business groups in the education sector and the educational policies for financing and granting scholarships, aiming to increase access to this level of education, are two important factors that attest to the commercialization of Higher education currently. In view of this, it is urgent to build strategies that aim to overcome this model of education, so that the fight against commodified education presupposes the overcoming of capital and all other instances that it subordinates, especially legal determinations, political conventions and the bourgeois state.

### KEYWORDS

Work. Higher Education. Mercantilization.

## O Processo de Mercantilização da Educação Superior no Brasil e a Negação da Formação Humana: Uma Análise Crítica a partir de István Mészáros

### RESUMO

A mercantilização da Educação superior constitui-se na apropriação deste nível de ensino como uma mercadoria manipulada em função do seu valor de troca para a extração de mais valia e conseqüente acúmulo de capital. Desse modo, é possível concebê-la como um desdobramento de fatores que se originam na interface da ordem produtiva vigente. Esse fenômeno expressa uma concepção reducionista e precária de educação, que distorce e compromete a função social que o complexo educacional desempenha na formação humana. À luz do Materialismo Histórico-Dialético, esta pesquisa tem caráter bibliográfico e documental, a partir de livros, artigos e documentos oficiais. Os resultados mostram que o processo de mercantilização da Educação superior no Brasil está historicamente vinculado à expansão desse nível de ensino, a partir das reformas do Estado brasileiro no campo educacional, mostrando sua posição subalterna em relação às demandas impostas pelo capital; e que o papel dos grupos empresariais do setor educacional e as políticas educacionais de financiamento e concessão de bolsas de estudo, com o objetivo de ampliar o acesso a esse nível de ensino, são dois importantes fatores que atestam a mercantilização da Educação superior atualmente. Diante disso, é urgente construir estratégias que visem a superação desse modelo de educação, de forma que o combate à educação mercantilizada pressuponha a superação do capital e de todas as demais instâncias a que ele subordina, em especial as determinações legais, as convenções políticas e o Estado burguês. deu após de 2006, o que caracteriza lacunas para estudos futuros.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Trabalho. Educação superior. Mercantilização.

## El Proceso de Mercantilización de la Educación Superior en Brasil y la Negación de la Formación Humana: Una Análisis Crítica de István Mészáros

### RESUMEN

La mercantilización de la Educación superior constituye la apropiación de este nivel educativo como una mercancía manipulada según su valor de cambio para la extracción de valor agregado y conseqüente acumulación de capital. Así, es posible concebirlo como un despliegue de factores que se originan en la interfaz del actual orden productivo. Este fenómeno expresa una concepción reducionista y precaria de la educación, que distorsiona y compromete la función social que juega el complejo educativo en la formación humana. A la luz del Materialismo Histórico-Dialético, esta investigación tiene un carácter bibliográfico y documental, provenientes de libros, artículos y documentos oficiales. Los resultados muestran que el proceso de mercantilización de la Educación superior en Brasil está históricamente ligado a la expansión de este nivel educativo, a partir de las reformas del Estado brasileño en el campo educativo, mostrando su posición subordinada en relación a las demandas impuestas por el capital.; y que el papel de los grupos empresariales en el sector educativo y las políticas educativas para el financiamiento y otorgamiento de becas, con el objetivo de ampliar el acceso a este nivel educativo, son dos factores importantes que dan fe de la mercantilización de la Educación superior en la actualidad. Por tanto, es urgente construir estrategias que apunten a superar este modelo de educación, para que la lucha contra la educación comercializada suponga la superación del capital y todas las demás instancias a las que se subordina, especialmente las determinaciones legales, convenciones políticas. el Estado burgués.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Trabajo. Educación superior. Mercantilización.

## Introduction

The mercantilization of higher education is the appropriation of this level of education as manipulated product according to its value for the extraction of extra worth and the consequent accumulation of money. In this way, it can be considered as a connecting of factors that originate at the interface of the productive and dominant social order.

This incidence expresses one reductionist and precarious conception of education, which is conserved as a simple instrument for the internalization and reproduction of the dominant and exploitative logic of money. This process modifies the social function that the educational represent in human formation, through the appropriation of the material and cultural products historically produced and accumulated by mankind.

In Brazil, this process is associated to the expansion of Higher Education (HE) that began in the middle of twentieth century, with the contribution of the educational instructions and reforms that systematized this level of education. This occasioned for the increase participation of private segment in the education process. For instance, the growth in the number of courses offered by non-university Higher Education Institutions, such as isolated colleges.

The edition of Law nº 4.024/61 (Law of Directives and Bases for National Education), structured for the organization of the Brazilian education system and the Law nº 5.540/68 (University Reform Law), aimed at the Federal Institutions of Higher Education (IFES), associated with other actions, was essential to satisfy the technocratic and private requests of the dominant class. The latter, seeking to extract productive advantages from education, contributed to the maintenance of the historically subordinated position of the country in favor of the determinations of capital.

Predominantly, during the years of military dictatorship (1964-1985), the dictatorial and conservative interests shaped by the ideological orientation of the government with parts of civil society and foreign groups stimulated actions that converged the needs for reforms and changes imposed by the system. A similar process occurred in the same period in many Latin American countries, such; Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, a result of the imposition of a program of economic domination determined by a conjuncture of crisis and regimes of exception that spread through various parts of the continent in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the 1990 the programmed expansion mentioned was implemented and consolidated, but now the effects of the globalization of money and its interference of neoliberal rules. The recommendations imposed by multilateral organizations and financial agents with the reformist educational policies implemented in this period, were decisive for the conversion of the higher education in Brazil into a control of a commercial, corporative and business practices.

According to the mentioned, we understand that the current situation of the higher education in Brazil can be characterized as the result of a process that involves the decisive action of the state as a complementary factor in the preservation of the demands set and regulated by the established productive order. The social programs like University Program for All (PROUNI) and the Student Financing Program demonstrate that, for while they promote access to higher education for thousands of students, spreading the discourse of the supposed universalization and democratization of this level of education. This system finances privileges to private sectors and change the right to a free public education provide by institutions that operate to promote business groups committed to financial speculation, financial advantage and the domination of the educational sector.

This restriction of higher education to a commodity condition is an important phenomenon to be investigated in order to understand its development context, its causes and consequences. This is a process generated by capitalist societies that has currently intensified consequence of the relating of the standard of transformations that affect the field of production and that resound in the most diverse areas of the social circle. Therefore, the theoretical study of the complexities, contradictions, and impasses that run through education, as a social practice, is of utmost importance for the understanding of reality in its historical dynamics.

In this direction, this paper raises the following question: what is the mercantilization of higher education in Brazil? In order to answer this question, it was defined as a general objective to analyze the process by which higher education becomes a commodity aligned to the logic of capital reproduction. Based on that, the specific objectives were to describe the historical context of higher education expansion in Brazil, to identify the factors that generate the commodification of higher education and, finally, to define the implications of this phenomenon.

This text is structured in four parts, besides of the introduction. In the first part, we present connections between the complexes of labor and education, their foundations, particular dimensions and interactions within the order of money. In the second, we describe the historical context in which the expansion of higher education in Brazil occurred. In the third section, we discuss the factors and implications that involve its mercantilization in Brazil. Finally, we make some final considerations.

The research is bibliographic and documental in nature, with data survey and analysis based on books, articles and official documents. Based on the Historical-Dialectical Materialism, the theoretical discussions will be based on the studies of Leontiev (1978), Marx (2013), Mészáros (2008; 2011), Minto (2006), Santos (2019) and Sguissardi (2000; 2002; 2008; 2015). So, we aim to take a reflective and critical look towards the phenomenon of mercantilization of Higher Education, as well as to foster academic production and institutional debate around the issue, bringing contributions to the field and educational practice, in a way that involves the most diverse agents and groups, since the struggle for qualitative changes in the educational environment should be a flag of collective mobilization that is not exhausted in

the field of theory, but that should develop current actions that bring real improvements for the whole society.

## The relationship between labor and education

In order to analyze the process of mercantilization of higher education in Brazil, it is necessary to briefly review the essential correlation between the complexes of education and labor, their foundations, particular dimensions, and interactions within the order of capital. Thus, we intend to conduct a study of the phenomenon of mercantilization, looking for its roots in the field of material production.

As affirmed by Marx (2013, p. 326), “man, by his own action, mediates, regulates and controls his metabolism with nature. So that, "by acting on external nature and modifying it through this movement, he modifies at the same time, his own nature" (Idem).

In this sense, it is possible to notice that a work is considered an action through which human being aim to satisfy their needs. It involves man's intervention over nature, transforming it and transforming himself dialectically. Through this activity, it was possible for mankind to produce the means that guarantee and guarantee its survival. And here it is worth emphasizing the importance of human action guided by a teleology, which operated and operates first in the field of consciousness through prior planning, to later bring to the objective level the products resulting from the act of work.

This is how the objective and subjective conditions matured that allowed man to complex his needs and the means to intervene in them, defining himself as a human being different from other species not only in function of his productive action, but also the physical capacities, which allowed to generate new things and incessantly develop himself.

Throughout this permanent exchange with the environment human kind established their humanity building their own environment and a way of living in the world that is different of the others animals. This difference did not occur in a simple and superficial way, but was crossed by stages; in this way, they need to dominate nature to guarantee survival, this situation prepared man from the incipient handling of rudimentary instruments to the manufacture and complete tools, in a phase in which the pace imposed by production interfered with his biological development, promoting anatomical changes that conduced them to another level of evolution (LEONTIEV, 1978).

Therefore, work is a determining factor in the development human kind. It provided the ontological increase (LUKÁCS, 2018) from biological to social being. Thus, the development itinerary of human social nature and its complex link with the productive universe was given.

Based on the alleged above, it is possible to state that labor, after all, is a founding category from which all other social complexes emerge, such as art, education, science and religion. Work is also the main responsible for the "qualitative and structuring changes" (LUKÁCS, 2018, p. 11) that occur in the course of the formation of the society.

Therefore, the work and education is situated as a derivative complex that maintains with it a "relationship of ontological dependence and relative autonomy" (AMORIM, 2018, p. 23), because at the same time that it derives from it, it cannot be confused with it and cannot be restricted to it. So that, both work and education have fundamental and particular dimensions that are intersected in the historically constructed social process.

The connection between these two complexes is given by the fact that work, besides consolidation the relationship between human kind and nature, promoting their structural transformations and capacity to produce the innovative, has generated a whole material and cultural heritage crystallized in objects and phenomena produced historically. However, the appropriation of these objects generated in the productive act was only possible through an educational process, which allowed the people of other times to access what was produced by previous generations, and this made collective development possible. In this sense, it is notable that the very movement of history would be unfeasible without the transmission of the acquisitions of human culture through education (LEONTIEV, 1978). Therefore, the educational complex has a decisive social function.

In this way, Bertoldo (2015, p. 164) understands that education "seeks to conserve, maintain, and preserve everything that human being, throughout his existence, has learned to do. In another way, but complementing and consolidating such statement, Rossi (2018, p. 38) notes that "education is the social complex responsible for the transmission and appropriation of the spiritual legacy human culture in a comprehensive sense - developed historically and socially by humankind".

In this sense, it is understood that the educational complex fulfills a specific role within the social reproduction, and given its partial autonomy, it cannot be separated from the sphere of work, which is the central element to permit the existence of human being.

Still, in the current stage of capitalist society, education is disconnected from the properties mentioned above, assuming a restrictive meaning, since it is instrumentalized to exercise, predominantly the ideological diffusion of the established social and productive order, through the internalization of the general reproductive parameters of the system (MÉZSÁROS, 2008) emphasis that, from the money point of view, there is a denial of human formation in its multiple meanings, so that human being is only responsible for incorporating in themselves the necessary elements that guarantee the conservation of the dominant order.

The Marxist philosopher István Mészáros (2011) is enthusiastic in stating that the money is an invincible and absolute power that through its uncontrollable and destructive

nature, increase to an organic system that binds all subordinate instances to its productive imperious, reducing them to the victim of its amplified force and capacity of reproduction. In this sense, both education and work are declined to a reified and alienating position.

In dealing with the impacts of capital on work and the effects of this on the social order, Santos (2019, p. 35) brings a essential element to this reflection:

Work has become a paradox: it possesses the power to engender the world and the human being, while stratifying and excluding; capable of putting individuals in interaction in the same activity, while separating society into chasms; it produces use-values to satisfy human needs, while it serves the accumulation and misdistribution of wealth through the production of excess; while creative action that produces beauty, it also manufactures the misery of the world; while it removes the individual from natural barriers, it can also without limit, subjugate him.

Confronted with this paradox, the capital system puts labor, a fundamental category, in front of an insoluble contradiction within its socio-metabolism, since it dominates and exploits this productive activity. And from this, it subordinates the other spheres of the social process to a mercantile condition, relegating the satisfaction of human needs to the background, in favor of the reproduction of the system through the compulsive generation of wealth for the enjoyment and control of a minority, at the expense of collective subsistence, thus promoting inequality and poverty.

In this way, education as a complex produced work, is also affected by this process, and through the appropriation of its usual of cultural references historically produced and accumulated, loses its intrinsic properties and its mediating character for human formation. Then, a restrictive conception of education produces, which is treated as a tool subordinated to an economic logic, becoming a commercial product in which the exchange value succeeds according to the social order in force.

Considering the elements exposed about the relationship between work and education in this short discussion above, let's move on to the context in which the process of commercialization of Higher Education in Brazil emerged.

## The Expansion of Higher Education in Brazil

To answer the question about the constitution of the process of mercantilization of higher education in Brazil, it is necessary to describe unwhat circumstances the expansion of higher education occurred in the country, since the phenomena that involve education result from multiple and mutual determinations of a socio-historical nature.

According to Mészáros (2008, p. 25), "educational processes and the broader social processes of reproduction are intimately linked. In this direction, the expansion of Higher

Education in Brazil follows and is linked to the transformations that happened in the country and in the world during the 20th century; these, clearly, are relating of the movement of the social order of capital and its impacts on the economic, political and social areas.

In global terms, the 20th century witnessed intense changes in the socioeconomic dynamics. The Crisis of 1929 and the Second World War (1939-1945), for example, while exposing the limits and contradictions of capital, its uncontrollability and potential for destruction, served to reaffirm the changing capacity of this social order to generate new forms of accumulation. Therefore, in the half of this century the United States emerged as a political and economic power in the American continent, starting to practice a foreign policy of assistance and control of developing countries through the so called "Alliance for Progress" (MINTO, 2006).

This stage, education in Brazil and in many parts of Latin America was designated by the strategies of the productive system and incorporated into the strategies and policies that placed developing countries in a subordinate position within the new established order. Thus, the expansion of higher education was taken over by the demands of reformism that previously affected other institutional domination.

The intensification of the commercialization of higher education in Brazil is strictly related to the process of organization and expansion of educational system to satisfy these needs, so that what followed was the implementation of educational policies and reforms that stimulated the growth of institutions, courses and places from the 1960.

From the legal point of view, several measures were adopted to reorganize higher education in Brazil. Among them, it is worth mentioning the edition of Law no. 4.024/61 (Law of Directions and Bases for National Education) and Law no. 5.540/68 (Law of University Reform), since, through these legal devices, many of the practices that would come to define the model of higher education carried out in the country began to strengthen, satisfying the interests of the dominant groups.

The Law of directions and bases for national education of 1961, bringing purposes for the reorganization of the education system, opened precedents for the favoring of private interests and revealed the strength of dominant and conservative groups in imposing an agenda convergent with the elite's project. According to Minto (2006, p. 105), "the LDB was thus a kind of 'door that opened for the privatization process that would follow in Brazilian education in times of the Military Regime.

Following the same methods, the university reform sanctioned in 1968, brought actions to configuring the University, which the following stand out: curricular flexibility with the credit system and the semester system; creation of departments by north American influence of short term courses and the qualifying admission exam; connected between teaching, research, and extension; permanent organization and limited dedication of professors.

According to the author, It is important to demonstrating that these determinations are the result of disputes between various sectors of society that aimed to modernize the university to increase its productivity and efficiency overcoming the traditionalism and inflexibility of the previous model. Despite the advances achieved in structural terms, mainly due to the pressures of the faculty and students movement, in the end, the conceptions and proposals aimed at the privatizing agreement (MINTO, 2006, p. 122).

In this way, the referred reform, while reorganizing the university system, also allowed higher education to be provided exceptionally in isolated establishments, organized as public or private law institutions. (BARBALHO, 2007, p. 77). The result was that in the decade after its promulgation, there was an expansion of the higher education system determined by the growth in the number of private institutions and isolated establishments. During a interruption of only twenty years, the number of enrollments in private higher education institutions increase from 54,721 (1964) to 827,660 (1984), as can be seen below.

**Table 1:** Evolution of enrollments in Brazilian higher education by administrative category (public and private) – 1964-1994

Year	Total of Enrollments	public enrollment		private enrollment	
		Total	%	Total	%
-	-	Total	%	Total	%
1964	142.386	87.665	61,6	54.721	38,4
1974	937.593	341.028	36,4	596.565	63,5
1984	1.399.539	571.879	40,9	827.660	59,1
1994	1.661.034	690.450	41,6	970.584	58,4

Fonte: Sguissardi (2008) – Adaptado

As we can see in the table above, it is possible to affirm that the expansion of higher education that began in the 1960 accelerated in the following decades through privatization. Between 1964 and 1974 there was an accelerated expansion of higher education with a growth from 142,386 to 937,593 registered, a practically seven times. In 1974, registrations in private institutions already absorbed 63.5% of the higher school, while enrollments in public institutions corresponded to 36.4%. This suggests that starting in the 1970 the private system took the lead over the public system and this tendency was not reversed.

In this sense, we point out that some of the strategies that emerged during the military dictatorship were incorporated interested in the proposals and policies implemented in the 1990. It represents a consolidation of the ideals considered during that period. Among these is

important to expose that the practices that intended at administrative modernization and institutional diversification and differentiation (MINTO, 2006). Those initiatives added to the configuration and subordination imposed by external managers marked a time of alteration in the relations between the public and the private education.

In this context in the 1990, strategies intended to a fiscal adjustment, incentive to foreign investments, reduction of public spending, stimulus to public and private companies and increased privatization, furthermore, were framed. All these orientations were in accordance with and linked to the trend of neoliberal reformism that had spread in part of Latin America, United States, Germany, and England between the 1980 and 1990 (SGUISSARDI, 2002). Such measures followed the recommendations issued by external organs, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), as well as the Washington Consensus.

Through the above guidelines as a reference, especially during the years of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government (1995-2002), several actions were implemented in order to carry out a administrative reform of the Brazilian State. Such indications have affected the higher education and facilitated the domination of this level of education by the private sector. It is worth pointing out that during this period there was a reduction in public higher education and that no federal higher institution was created, which shows how public interest was being undermined for the benefit of the private sector.

Another important feature that affected the higher education and its development in this period was the declaration of decrees 2.207 and 2.306, in 1997, which regulated provisions present in LDB/96. These measures would reinforce private and isolated faculties. Consequently, compromising the inseparability between teaching, research, and extension that was predicted in the Reform in 1968.

Thus, the changes in higher education during the 1990 were, to a excessive level related to the principle of administrative flexibility, and synthesized the introduction of the "capitalist and private managerial rationality, which translates into the reduction of the public sphere or the expansion of capital and its organizational rationality" (SGUISSARDI, 2000, p. 50).

As a result, the most recent movement in higher education ideas to open of the market to private higher education. Thus, many institutions become factual educational companies, even reaching the standard market supported by national and international funds. In association with the federal government, they have been profiting from the Brazilian State's educational policies. For example the case of the programs called: PROUNI and FIES, initiatives that, while seeking to broaden access a higher education to promote a suspected democratization of this level of education, favor business groups linked to financial speculation and the monopoly of the educational sector.

Having presented the historical context of the commodification of higher education and its close connection to the expansion of this type of private education, we will now analyze the factors that constitute this commodification and its implications for the higher education scenario.

## Commercialization of the Higher Education in Brazil

The basic function of production is to satisfy human being needs, producing it the value of use and exchange. For Marx (2013, p. 97), it "is first of all an external object, a thing that, through its properties, satisfies human needs of some kind. The nature of these needs, for example, they come from the stomach or from the imagination does not change the matter at all.

Thus, in ancient societies that did not have wealth as an objective, as is the case of Indian societies (production for direct self-consumption of society) and the guild system (oriented to the production of use values) of the middle Ages, use value preceded exchange value (MÉSZÁROS, 2011). But in the current system, the exchange value of commodities prevails over use value. Thus, the entire productive process is geared toward the accumulation and reproduction of the system, and no longer toward the satisfaction of social needs. As a result, the most diverse aspects of reality end up reduced to the condition of merchandise.

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In this direction, Amorim (2018, p. 131) mentioned that, when dealing with the role of education linked to the dictates of the capital, highlights that "[...] regardless of historical moments, whether these are moments of capital's peak or crisis, the purpose of education institutionalized by the bourgeois State remains the same, that is, to meet the interests of the capital to the detriment of human development." In view of this, it is inevitable that the most diverse educational processes end up subordinated to the designs of the productive sphere.

After we see this discussion above, we can understand that the process of mercantilization of higher education in Brazil is the result of multiple socially and historically constructed determinations, and these determinations attest to the preponderance of the economic element for its conservation. It is supported by the expansion of higher education under the leadership of the private sector, interference of international agents and decisive action of the State, reconfiguring not only the boundaries between public and private, but also subordinating itself to the premises and designs of capital in constant mutation.

In recent years, higher education in Brazil has maintained the degree of dependence on the private sector that began in previous decades. Based on recent data gathered by the federal government, it is possible to measure the stage this process has reached. The last Census of Higher Education highlighted that in 2018 88.2% of higher education institutions were private, and that of the 3.4 million students who entered undergraduate higher education courses, 83.1%

did so in private institutions (BRASIL, 2019, p. 11). Furthermore, in the period between 2008 and 2018, the private network increased by 59.3%, while the public network grew by 7.9% in the same period.

Two specific factors are present in the current circumstances and contribute to the understanding that higher education in Brazil is going through a process of commodification: the protagonism of business groups in the education sector and the benefit granted by the Brazilian State to them, through educational policies of financing and granting of scholarships, aiming to increase access to this level of education.

Since 2007, "with the opening of the capital of educational groups in the São Paulo Stock Exchange (BM&FBovespa)" there has been an advance in the financialization of Higher Education coming from "negotiations strictly directed to mercantile interests" (CHAVES, 2019, p. 68). Kroton, Estácio, Ânima, and Ser educacional, for example, are some of the educational companies that have been leading this process in the country. Acting through mergers and acquisitions of smaller institutions, they form true oligopolies that dominate the higher and spread the market logic.

These groups were made possible by the historically permissive legislation created by the State and stimulated by focal social policies, appropriate to the reformist strategy adopted by the Brazilian government in recent decades. These, under the pretense of universalizing and democratizing access to higher education, contributed, to a large extent, to dismiss it as a right and convert it into a service delivered and regulated by companies committed to profit (SGUISSARDI, 2015). In addition, the strengthening of these groups demonstrates the hegemony of financial capital and its influence at the national and international level.

Therefore, this is a problem of global repercussion. It is not restricted to the Brazilian reality. Saviani (2018, p. 249), when referring to the current domination of market interests in the educational field, highlights that, as a consequence of the "Capitalist International", the "Educational Capitalist International" emerges, involving several business groups. In the US, for example, the movement of corporate reform of education is being spread, above all, by the American neoliberal right, which aims to convert education into a service regulated by the free market (FREITAS, 2018).

In recent years several state actions have intensified this process of marketization. Programs such as PROUNI and FIES, for example, which emerged with the intention of correcting the difficulties regarding access to higher education ended up serving to turn education into a profitable service, while satisfying the demands of the private sector compromising the public interest. The PROUNI, institutionalized in 2005, through Law N° 11,096, is a federal government creativity to grant partial or full scholarships for undergraduate courses, through tax exception for private institutions that follow it.

Analyzing this program, Costa (2011, p. 117) reveals the Brazilian government disregard for public higher education, since the scholarships offered by it, "whether partial or complete, effectively configure the transfer of values belonging to the public sector of higher education to private education, in a clear process of scrapping public institutions, through tax waivers.

An additional program that represents a similar situation is the FIES, whose goal is to finance students enrolled in higher education courses at private. In the words of Chaves (2019, p. 71, my translation):

Prouni and Fies constitute government mechanisms for strengthening the commodification, privatization, and financialization of Brazilian higher education, to the extent that they sponsor the increase in the net worth of private-mercantile educational groups, whether listed on the BM&FBovespa or not. This can be confirmed by the financial performance of the Kroton, Estácio, Ânima and Ser Educacional groups, which have been exceeding the average of Brazilian companies as a result of the solid state financing in recent years.

As a result of the above, an important point stands out: the official discourse of democratization of access to higher education is accompanied, in practice, by precariousness, since by financing private institutions of a mercantile nature, the state compromises public HEI scarce resources, destabilizing universities, devaluing the teaching work and, thus, generating a poor quality education for students among many other problems. In this sense, "[...] the ideologization of neoliberal policies present in PROUNI and FIES, or any other that we can refer to here, which passes the conception of democratization of higher education, although in reality, it produces exclusion, by prioritizing private HEI as a means of access for the working class" (FREIRE, 2015, p. 170), in fact, destructs the higher education.

However, this process is not reduced to a financial issue or to something related only to the relations between public and private, but essentially involves the very determinations of the prevailing social order. The result is massification, not democratization, since a dual system is created where there is, on one hand, the expansion of an elite and highly qualified higher education for the few and, on the other, an expansion of massification and low quality for the majority (SGUISSARDI, 2015).

In this same sense, it is possible to add to the debate the discussion about the directions taken by higher education in recent times, involving the historical class struggle, an ineliminable element in the capital order and that makes it never desirable for those who dominate the critical insertion of the oppressed. Thus, the creative and transformative dimensions are denied due a conception that promotes only the reproduction and domestication of individuals (FREIRE, 2011).

Therefore, the phenomenon of the commodification of higher in Brazil derives from the role that education occupies in the current productive system, which creates a "school for the poor and another for the dominant classes" (SANTOS, 2019, p. 37). Explain that, "while the second prepares their descendants to command, to occupy the best positions and perpetuate the

possession of property; the first is offered an education that minimally ensures the necessary knowledge to master the skills indispensable to productive work" (Idem). Associated with this is the dual movement in which higher education is inserted.

In the first movement, it is constituted as education merchandise, becoming a product to be acquired by a certain consumer. In this way, an undergraduate course, for example, offered by a college, would be a commodity. In the second, it would be a commodity-education, since it is a necessary means for the formation of other commodities, and can generate a reserve army to serve capital (RODRIGUES, 2007 apud SGUISSARDI, 2008). This interests both the education entrepreneur, who benefits from commodity education, and the industry entrepreneur, who is interested in commodity education.

In this logic, it is understood that access to higher education is not related to the socialization of the most advanced knowledge for the human formation of individuals, but to a need that emerges from the field of material production associated with the greater development of science and technique that, consequently, requires more qualified workers adapted to the demands produced by the mutations of the capital in a globalized reality (SAVIANI, 2018). Also, it is reiterated that the Brazilian State establishes a relationship of cooperation with the private initiative, which reveals its particular nature as a political instrument of bourgeois domination that, under the appearance of universality, democratization and formal legality, serves, in fact, to satisfy groups committed to the profit that is taken from the supply of services.

Considering the place that education occupies within the market and the role it assumes the preservation of capital, we have that, in general terms, under the aegis of reformism, education, in a broad sense, has been losing its transforming and emancipating potential, serving, mainly, for the maintenance of a system that alienates and subordinates man to its imperatives, preventing human formation, understood as an intentional and systematic process that aims to develop the multiple dimensions of the historical subject.

The implications of this process involve institutions, students, teachers, and society as a whole, since the controlling order of the social metabolism of capital subordinates everything, reproducing and sharpening inequalities. Thus, the mercantilization of higher education in Brazil, as it translates into a process of quantitative and privatistic expansion of this level of education, as already exposed, brings several consequences, such as the poor training of students and the instability of the teaching work, which compromises the quality of education and, therefore, the human formation aimed at a critical and transforming view of reality.

From the institutional point of view, this mainly affects public HEIs, which even with all the limitations imposed by the order, are still an access route closer to the working classes and that, therefore, can serve the "organization and struggle of the working class" against the "bourgeois dehumanizing project" (SANTOS, 2019, p. 116).

In this logic, the creation of strategic actions to confront the commodification of higher education in Brazil, as well as the overcoming of the established order does not exclude the imperative assignment of seeking to act within the concrete circumstances, but without surrendering to the dominant logic. For the employed class public education is still what makes its formation possible. In this interpretation, Mészáros' (2008, p. 77.). Highlight statement that "the mediating steps towards the future - in the sense of the only viable form of self-mediation - can only start from the immediate, but illuminated by the space that it can legitimately occupy within the global strategy oriented by the glimpsed future".

In the current context of the organizational crisis of capital and the participation of higher education in Brazil is financial by commercial interests. Thus, is necessary to retake the comprehensive and emancipating conception of education in order to realize a break with the established structures. Hence, we agree with Mészáros (2008, p. 25) when he states that "(...) a significant reform of education is inconceivable without the corresponding transformation of the social organization in which the educational practices in the society must realize the active and important functions of change realized historically.

According with this analysis, it is important stating that only by organizing a change that goes beyond of the reformist purposes in the name of a qualitative social transformation is possible to release the comprehensive character of education for human formation in several aspects. thus, advancing beyond the mercantiled educational processes imposed by the capital system.

## Final considerations

The process of mercantilization of higher education in Brazil is historically connected to its expansion after the reorganization of this level of education by the State reforms, showing its subordinate position in relation to the demands imposed by the capital order.

Therefore, in the face of the established system, the State is an instrument at the service of maintaining the privileges of the dominant groups. This statement is confirmed by the expansion of higher education that started in the 1960, through the neoliberal actions that took place in the 1990 until the recent period with the educational policies represented by PROUNI and FIES.

As a result of this process, which has intensified over the last decades, the domination of higher education by business groups is currently increasing, and as a consequence public higher educations are being argued. The State, in turn, in order to fulfill its commitment to the financial and mercantile demands of money, contributes to fragile the public education while investing resources in private higher education institutions.

Considering the problematic, it becomes urgent to build strategies aimed at overcoming the education model that distorts and compromises the social function that the educational complex has in human formation through the appropriation of the set of cultural references historically produced and accumulated. And since the mercantilization of higher education in Brazil, is an unfolding of the factors that emerge from the capital order, fighting against a mercantilized education means overcoming the capital and all the other instances that it subordinates, especially the legal determinations, the political conventions, and the bourgeois State.

However, this is a complex assignment that involves struggles and positive actions that go from the immediate temporality scale to a strategic level of long temporality going through the short, medium, and long period. In this way, the radical rejection of a mercantilized higher education for the affirmation of another, committed to human formation involves the prioritization of working class education which even impacted by the determinations imposed by the current order can contribute and articulated with other fields of social life to the construction of resistance mechanisms associated with the socialist alternative (MÉSZÁROS, 2011).

Such an immediate assignment is fundamental for what built in the present reality expands in the long term and is added to other strategies of a mediating nature that aim to consolidate a radically transformed social reality.

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