



Technocratic education: social control and the reproduction of structural inequalities¹

Educação tecnocrática: controle social e a reprodução das desigualdades estruturais

Educación tecnocrática: control social y reproducción de desigualdades estructurales

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Abstract

This interdisciplinary study investigates technicality in Brazilian politics and education from 1968 to the end of the 1970s, through a qualitative and documentary approach based on Fazenda (2013). During the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil, educational technicality was more than a pedagogical approach, as it was applied for ideological control and maintenance of authoritarian power. Implemented in educational reforms, it prioritized technical efficiency over critical education, using education to conform and repress dissidence. In an attempt to sustain the regime, this perspective also contributed to its decline, by ignoring the cultural forces that resisted its imposition. As in the past, the approach analyzed subordinates education to economic needs, reinforces inequalities and limits the critical education of students.

Keywords: Education; Technicality; Technician pedagogy; Civil-military dictatorship.

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Resumo

Este estudo interdisciplinar investiga o tecnicismo na política e educação brasileiras de 1968 até o fim dos anos 1970, por meio de uma abordagem qualitativa e documental embasada em Fazenda (2013). Durante a ditadura civil-militar no Brasil, o tecnicismo educacional foi mais que uma abordagem pedagógica, ao ser aplicado para o controle ideológico e a manutenção do poder autoritário. Implementado nas reformas de ensino, priorizava eficiência técnica em detrimento de uma formação crítica, ao utilizar a educação para conformar e reprimir a dissidência. Na tentativa de sustentar o regime, tal perspectiva também contribuiu para seu declínio, ao ignorar as forças culturais que resistiam à imposição. Assim como no passado, a abordagem analisada subordina o ensino às necessidades econômicas, reforça desigualdades e limita a formação crítica dos estudantes.

Palavras-chave: Educação; Tecnicismo; Pedagogia tecnicista; Ditadura civil-militar.

Resumen

Este estudio multifacético investiga el tecnicismo en la política y la educación brasileñas desde 1968 hasta finales de la década de 1970, a través de un enfoque cualitativo y documental basado en Fazenda (2013). Durante la dictadura cívico-militar en Brasil, el tecnicismo educativo fue más que un enfoque pedagógico, ya que se aplicó para el control ideológico y el mantenimiento del poder autoritario. Implementado en las reformas educativas, priorizó la eficiencia técnica sobre la educación crítica, utilizando la educación para conformar y reprimir la disidencia. En un intento de sostener el régimen, esta perspectiva también contribuyó a su decadencia, al ignorar las fuerzas culturales que resistieron su imposición. Como en el pasado, el enfoque analizado subordina la educación a las necesidades económicas, refuerza las desigualdades y limita la educación crítica de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Educación; Tecnicismo; Pedagogía tecnicista; Dictadura cívico-militar.

Received: 2025/05/11

Approved: 2025/09/16

Introduction

This article highlights the specific educational transformations from 1968 to 1979, marked by the civil-military dictatorship. After the 1971 educational reform, this period was characterized by the implementation of technocratic policies in education, which sought rationality, efficiency, and productivity in teaching to reflect the priorities of the authoritarian government. The focus on pedagogical technocracy highlighted a movement that advocated the application of technical and pragmatic methods in education, aligning technical and professional training with the economic development model of the time. Theoretical, bibliographical, and documentary in nature, with a qualitative approach and an interdisciplinary perspective based on the assumptions of Fazenda (2013), this research explores the technocracy prevailing in Brazilian politics and education during the aforementioned period, during the military regime.

In this context, for Fazenda (2013, p. 11), interdisciplinarity represents "a new stance toward knowledge, an invitation to explore the less obvious aspects of the learning process and those that seem more evident, challenging them." In other words, this approach and research approach leads to an understanding of the phenomenon of pedagogical technicism. First, the context of the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil, established after the 1964 coup, is presented. This context was marked by authoritarianism and censorship, in which *Ato Institucional* No. 5 (AI-5) (Brasil, 1968a) intensified political and social repression, while the "economic miracle" widened inequalities.

Then, the ideas that generated technicism are analyzed, influenced by Skinner's behaviorism (2003) and the Taylorist and Fordist models. These theories valorized technical science, marginalized other forms of knowledge, and legitimized educational control during the dictatorship. Finally, there is a reflection on the technical rigging of schools, centered on standardization and efficiency.

Political and Historical Context

As a government program, technicism was consolidated in Brazil starting in 1968 and lasted until 1979, during the period historians call the "civil-military dictatorship," stemming from the reactionary movements against the government of President João Goulart (Jango) in March 1964. Jânio Quadros had been elected president in October 1960 by the *União Democrática Nacional* (UDN) party. However, his administration failed to implement the reforms, proposals, and promises made during the campaign in the short term, in addition to failing to achieve the proposed strengthening of the government. Therefore, Jânio was forced to resign a year after taking office, on August 25, 1961.

According to the researcher, the resignation was accepted, but there were political difficulties in accepting the transfer of the mandate to then-Vice President João Goulart. This impasse was questioned by representatives of the country's elite, who, at the time, promoted a strong association with the interests of foreign capital, aligning with the involvement of members of the military leadership of the armed forces and a considerable portion of the Brazilian business community.

João Goulart's government also did not last long, as conservative sectors of civil society believed that the vice president's tenure, elevated to the highest governing position in the country, would pose a threat to Brazil's future. But, after all, what was the basis for this fear? Liberals considered Jango "a representative of *Varguismo*" who tended to inflate state power and institute a program of state interventionism that undermined economic freedom, while conservatives highlighted a dangerous tie with the Brazilian *Partido Comunista Brasileiro* (PCB) and the *Partido Socialista Brasileiro* (PSB). These groups were believed to be on the

verge of establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat through armed revolution, "even though there was no unanimity about the issue among the highest levels of the Armed Forces" (Gatti Júnior, 2010, p. 47).

Expressing fear and discontent with the dual direction of national policy and the corresponding reforms proposed by the executive branch, the backlash against Goulart was orchestrated by influential politicians such as Congressman Antônio Silva da Cunha Bueno, Senate President Auro de Moura Andrade, and Guanabara State Governor Carlos Lacerda. Protests and popular demonstrations, in turn, were led by civil entities, such as ecclesiastical institutions, women's organizations, family advocates, radicals, patriots, and far-right groups. They had the support of Congress, the Catholic Church, and the press – radio stations *Tupi* and *O Globo*, as well as the newspapers *Correio da Manhã*, *O Globo*, *Jornal do Brasil*, and *Diário de Notícias*, published persistent calls for "Out, Jango" in their front-page stories (Lemos, 2004).

On March 31, 1964, the president was deposed by the intervention of the army, when General Olímpio Mourão Filho, commander the 4th Infantry Division of Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais (MG), called upon the regiment to march to Rio de Janeiro (RJ), occupy the city, and remove Goulart from power. With Jango's flight to Brasília, Federal District (DF), and from there to Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul (RS), the president of the Senate, Auro de Moura Andrade, declared the executive branch vacant, effectively deposing the president. With the overthrow of Goulart, who was exiled in Uruguay, the army organized indirect elections for the positions of president and vice president, and General Humberto de Alencar Castello Branco was appointed by the Supreme Command of the Revolution to the presidency—this event became known as the "coup of 1964" in the country's official political history (Lemos, 2004).

According to Siquelli (2017), in his documentary analysis of Decree No. 477, of February 26, 1969 (Brazil, 1969b), known as the "AI-5 of education," which violated professionals in this field under state control; and Law No. 5,540, of November 28, 1968 (Brazil, 1968b), which covered the agreements between 1964 and 1968 between the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Brazilian education and educational policy were underestimated by contracts signed by a group of North American experts. This allows us to understand the imposition of educational reforms in Brazil, according to the capitalist standards of the United States of America (USA); and Law No. 4,464 (Brasil, 1964c), which placed student organizations under repression.

The aim is to demonstrate that the aid provided by USAID to the Brazilian educational process was yet another attempt to guarantee the profitability of the capital invested in the country, as the educational system produced a workforce efficiently capable of implementing the new economic model adopted after 1964. In five *AI*, the military extended the indirect election regime to maintain power for 21 consecutive years, until 1985. During this period, the dictatorship went through four distinct phases and was characterized, above all, by authoritarianism and an attitude of brutality and violent persecution of opponents, carried out through various means: exile, dismissals, revocation of political rights, abuse of power, censorship, repression, restrictions, and even death, imprisonment, and torture (Siquelli, 2017).

Throughout the period in question, IAs were contemplated that profoundly impacted the country's political and legal structure. First, AI-1 (Brazil, 1964a) maintained the National Congress in operation, but with significant modifications to the 1946 Constitution (Brazil, 1946), such as the suspension of parliamentary immunity and the authorization to revoke mandates at different levels of government. Furthermore, a ten-year suspension of the political rights of those whose positions were revoked was imposed. At the same time, the lifetime tenure of judges and the tenure of public servants were temporarily suspended for six months, and military police inquiries were created to investigate activities considered subversive.

Soon after, AI-2 (Brazil, 1965a) decreed the dissolution of political parties and stipulated the holding of indirect elections for the presidency. In turn, Complementary Act 4 (Brazil, 1965b) established the two-party system, limited the creation of new political parties, and restricted multiparty politics. Only two parties were authorized: *Arena*, representing the military government, and the *Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* (MDB), which was in opposition. Subsequently, AI-3 (Brazil, 1966a) extended the indirect election model to governors, with state representatives choosing them. This gave state governors the power to appoint mayors of capital cities, strengthening political control over these positions.

Subsequently, AI-4 (Brazil, 1966b) called for an extraordinary meeting of the National Congress to discuss, vote on, and enact a new draft constitution, a crucial initiative to legitimize the changes that would consolidate the new regime. Finally, AI-5 (Brazil, 1968a) represented the almost complete closure of the political system; it granted the executive branch direct intervention over the other branches of government, such as closing Congress and influencing the judiciary; it intensified control over the press; and began censoring works considered subversive or immoral.

It is worth highlighting the four stages of the civil-military dictatorship: the first refers to the government of Humberto Castello Branco (1964 to 1967), which, in the economic sector, adopted a policy of austerity to reduce spending, control inflation, and combat public debt; the second phase saw the transition to the government of Arthur da Costa e Silva (1967 to 1969), which he belonged to a hardline and radical wing of the army and, upon coming to power, established a technocratic regime with structural changes throughout the country. In this case, ideological disputes and struggles hindered the nation's development and should be replaced by a neutral, objective, and "impartial" policy, with a government led by technicians and experts.

It was understood that issues within the State's jurisdiction should be the responsibility of scientists in their respective fields—economy, agriculture, mining, and energy, etc.—where problems would need to be resolved through scientific intervention and competent, specialized action. This began a "white" revolution, in which political leadership was virtually eliminated, decision-making was centralized in the hands of experts, and Congress was reduced to a notary's office, fulfilling only the function of registering documents, while the political classes worked to rubber-stamp decrees.

In the economic sector, a developmental economic policy was adopted, inspired by that of Juscelino Kubitschek, but with different forms, with the aim of promoting socioeconomic advancement in the country. At the same time, the process of oppression, repression, and political persecution against the regime's opponents intensified.

In turn, the third phase comprised the government of General Emílio Médici (1969 to 1974), which continued the developmental program initiated by Costa e Silva. From 1968 to 1973, the country experienced high rates of economic growth driven by the following factors: increased and diversified exports; government subsidies to small businesses; internationalization of the economy, with the increasing entry of foreign companies; control over price adjustments and centralized setting of wage increases; expansion of infrastructure and the industrial sector; the creation of new jobs; and the creation of policies to stimulate consumption and public investment.

This phenomenon became known as the "economic miracle," but over time, it began to show signs of exhaustion, leading to socially negative consequences, such as a sharp process of income concentration, rising inequality, and progressive government indebtedness. Broadly speaking, Aranha (1989) indicates that the 1964 military coup opted for the valorization of foreign capital and ended the national-developmental cycle. The economic "recovery" implemented followed a model of income concentration, benefiting only a small portion of the population and imposing wage restrictions on workers.

With the rural exodus, large cities faced problems adequately housing migrants, which generated high levels of poverty, while the dictatorship restricted citizen participation and criticism by establishing itself violently. A succession of military presidents strengthened the executive branch while weakening the legislative branch, and exceptional measures, such as the National Intelligence Service (Law No. 104/2004), were implemented. Law No. 4,341 of June 13, 1964, and the National Security Law No. 7,170 of December 14, 1983, consolidated the government's authoritarian nature (Brasil, 1964b, 1983). Repression intensified after 1968, with torture, deaths, and disappearances that made any opposition to the regime risky; even so, urban guerrilla warfare began in 1969 and was harshly repressed (Araújo, 2009).

Problems were resolved through decree-laws imposed "from above," an authoritarian tactic and a *modus operandi* typical of dictatorships. During the Médici administration, the press was placed under strict surveillance, with a regime of censorship and repression prevailing—he was concerned about his own image and that of the government under his command. Thus, it sought to prevent the persecutions, brutality, imprisonment of political enemies, violence, and arbitrary acts committed by the dictatorship from being exposed and made public, while also massively using the media to promote the regime and foster a positive public image of the military government.

An official advertising campaign was instituted, distributing stickers and posters to incite love of country and a kind of nationalist jingoism. The slogan "*Brasil ame-o ou deixe-o*," which was a staple of political discourse at the time, symbolizes the blend of patriotic pride and authoritarianism and essentially means that citizens are free but have only two options: accept the regime's reforms and impositions without question, or be tacitly invited to leave the country.

The final phase, which began in 1974, was led by General Geisel, who remained in power until 1979, and Figueiredo (until 1985). The so-called "hard-line" military began to face strong opposition and disapproval from society, the economy had weakened significantly and disappointment was profound after the euphoria created by the "wave" of the economic miracle. During that period, the dictatorship entered into crisis and began to deteriorate in a process of slow and gradual dissolution of military political power. Thus began the country's political reopening, culminating in 1985 with new direct presidential elections and the return to democracy.

Saviani (2011) corroborates these assertions by noting that, with Law No. 5,540 (Brazil, 1968b), which addressed the university reform regulated by Decree No. 464 (Brazil, 1969a), and Opinion No. 252 of April 11, 1969 (Brazil, 1969c), technical qualifications were introduced in the pedagogy program. The military government established after the 1964 coup initiated educational reforms in 1969, guided by technicist pedagogy, which became the official guideline. However, this approach encountered resistance among prominent intellectual leaders, who began to criticize the adopted model, drawing on critical-reproductive theories, as highlighted by Saviani (2011).

The officialization of technicist pedagogy in Brazil occurred in the late 1960s, in response to the monopolistic phase of capitalism. According to Kuenzer and Machado (1982), this policy aimed to address the low productivity of the educational system, marked by high dropout and repetition rates, and to ensure a skilled workforce for post-coup industrial and economic development.

Ideas behind pedagogical technicism

The basis of technicism originates from several sources: Skinner's behaviorist psychology (2003), Wiener's cybernetic theory (1984), Taylorism/Fordism (Taylor, 1976; Ford, 2012), systemic theory (Bertalanffy, 1973), and neopositivism. This cultural and social phenomenon is "eroded" by scientific discoveries and advances and enters a process of overvaluation of scientific knowledge, resulting in other types of non-scientific knowledge

(cultural, historical, social, religious, among others) losing value proportionally and diminishing their authority and importance to new generations.

Thus, a "scientific" perspective was adopted, often with a corresponding cult of reason, as occurred during the Enlightenment period. However, scientism is not a neutral cultural phenomenon, unrelated to political disputes, but rather an ideology whose use justifies the power project that supposedly presents indisputable scientific truth in its favor and is invested with the authority of scientists who, allegedly, "know the truth" and can legislate in its name.

Therefore, technicism constitutes a second trend arising from the cultural environment dominated by euphoria, with the prosperity brought about by technology, and in which the bourgeois scientific worldview predominates. The social class considered the "owner" of the technical knowledge and technological heritage derived from this knowledge is, at the same time, invested with the power granted by this "inheritance" and believes itself entitled to legislate over (and govern) society, realizing that it possesses the instruments of action in the world and that the transformations established to improve it (progress and the society of the future) depend on it.

In these terms, technicism can be seen as a revolutionary ideology, based on a "utopia" or "ideal" of a society to be realized. As a movement, it consists of the absorption of political power by technology, with the seizure of power by those who possess the available technical-scientific heritage, who then control and administer society rationally – problems are addressed by areas of expertise and according to specialized knowledge. In a technicist society, the State is governed by the class of specialists, whose issues of public interest are evaluated by technical teams, experts, and specialists, while decisions are made according to the criteria of scientific reasonableness.

This occurs in theory, but in practice, a technicist government is controlled by the ruling class, with the same politicians and bureaucrats who hold the financial power to maintain science as a research activity. Since actions cannot be carried out without resources, it is necessary to finance it with money from investors who impose conditions and their own interests.

The only difference between the technicist and traditional political regimes is that, in the former, the bureaucrat becomes a technocrat and the bureaucracy, a technocracy; and, in the latter, politicians view technology as a means to their own ends and use technicism as a prerogative to neutralize political debate and silence opposition, under a supposed criterion of objectivity and neutrality, in addition to enforcing arbitrary decisions under the claim that they are endorsed by science and, therefore, demonstrate authority and respectability.

In essence, technicism can be defined according to the general characteristics described above. Thus, the following questions can be asked: how did technicism emerge in the context of the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship? To what extent was it (or was it not) realized? For authors such as Aranha (1989), the dreamed-of technocracy failed to be implemented, nor did it ever come to fruition in Brazil, as it presented itself as a trend in itself.

In the socioeconomic sphere, technicism never existed because Brazil did not develop technologically under the military, invest in cutting-edge technology, or become a first-world nation, especially during the Médici administration during the economic miracle. The implemented industrial and internationalist market project, inspired by American capitalism, benefited only a small ruling elite, primarily bankers and multinationals, while increasing inequality.

In the political sphere, technicism became an ideological discourse originated by a class of politicians, businesspeople, bureaucrats, and technocrats, seeking to perpetuate themselves in power while neutralizing the opposition by claiming that the best initiatives for the country would be to focus on scientific progress and abandon political and social disputes.

In education, technicism produced disastrous results for Brazil, with a strong tendency among the military to place schools at the service of the government's immediate interests. This sphere was seen as the ideal model to meet this objective and was greatly reflected in the laws that address the area. For example, between 1964 and 1968, 12 MEC-USAID agreements were signed to finance Brazilian education, with the mediation of the aforementioned US agency. Most of these agreements remained in effect until 1971 (Arapiraca, 1982) and were designed to support the reforms of higher education and primary and secondary education after the fact.

Brazilian educational policy at the time followed the guidelines established by North American experts (Ghiraldelli, 2000), based on three fundamental ideological pillars: education and development, aimed at training qualified professionals to meet the growing demand for specialized labor in a growing market; education and security, which sought to develop conscientious citizens and justified the inclusion of subjects such as *Educação Moral e Cívica*, *Organização Social e política do Brasil e Estudos de Problemas Brasileiros*; and education and community, which encouraged the creation of councils composed of businesspeople and teachers to foster interaction between schools and communities (Aranha, 1989).

In return, USAID expected technical advice, support, and financial assistance. Certainly, the package acquired by Brazil through the agreements presented an ideologically biased political intervention tool as a bonus. In the pedagogical context, the perspective guiding the program's implementation, according to Saviani (2011), can be defined as technocratic, with an emphasis on teaching methods and techniques, the screening of educational films made in the USA, and the valorization of audiovisual resources to be learned by scholarship recipients, whether for use or production.

However, the military government did not repeal the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação* (LDBEN) – Law No. 4,024 of December 20, 1961—to propose a technical education model and implement it as a political project to be developed in the country—instead, it introduced radical changes and updates to the text. From then on, primary and secondary education began to focus on professionalization and preparation for the job market, by "providing students with the training necessary to develop their potential as an element of self-realization, qualification for work, and preparation for the conscious exercise of citizenship" (Brasil, 1961, [n.p.]).

In this context, Law No. 5,692 of August 11, 1971, signed into law by President Médici, established the main objective of primary and secondary education: to provide students with the training necessary to develop their potential, thus achieving self-realization, qualification for the job market, and preparation for the conscious exercise of citizenship. Furthermore, Article 4 of the same law stipulated that curricula be organized around a common and homogeneous core, mandatory throughout the national territory, with a diversified component that should be adapted to local peculiarities, the educational institution's plans, and the needs of each student. This included the following provisions for defining curricular content: "For secondary education, the *Conselho Federal de Educação* shall establish, in addition to the common core, the minimum required for each professional qualification or set of related qualifications" (Brasil, 1971, Articles 3 and 4).

An emphasis on vocational training is evident, as demonstrated in the sequence of Article 4, which allowed educational institutions, with the approval of the *Conselho Federal de Educação* (CFE), to offer additional professional qualifications, even when there were no previously established curricular minimums, with the corresponding guarantee of national validity for the studies.

The following paragraphs made the offering of work preparation courses mandatory in schools, stating that they should be an integral part of students' education in primary and secondary education—in the latter, professional training could be included, depending on the institution's criteria. The law also established that special training should focus on aptitude

assessment, work initiation in primary education, and professional training in secondary education, tailored to the needs of the local or regional labor market. To this end, the legislation would encourage cooperation between educational institutions and companies to facilitate professional training.

Furthermore, Article 7 mandated the inclusion of new mandatory subjects, such as *Educação Moral e Cívica*, *Educação Física*, *Educação Artística e Programas de Saúde* in primary and secondary education curricula.

Meanwhile, Siquelli (2017) lists the reforms to university education—Law No. 5,540 (Brazil, 1968b) – and secondary – Law No. 5,692 (Brazil, 1971) –, in addition to understanding that the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship of the 20th century presented itself as a political regime in which the ruler (or ruling group) is not subject to the law and/or does not have legitimacy conferred by popular choice. He discusses aspects of the post-dictatorship period in the country and the historical forms instituted in public schools with the setbacks cultivated during the dictatorship and inherited through the proposals.

The legacies of that period—currently embedded in proposals and documents that shape the public education space—include the liberal character that sealed the emergence of democracy in Brazil and the redemocratization established in the 1990s, limited to the political realm (democratic school); the legal realm, with the *Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil* (CRFB) (Brazil, 1988), which designated education as a subjective right of every citizen; and the institutional realm, with curricular guidelines "disguised" as school autonomy. At the same time, the State established an evaluation system to determine whether the previously stipulated aspects were being met: "The democratic issue hovered only in the political dimension, and progress toward economic and social democratization was never discussed" (Siquelli, 2017, p. 162).

After Law No. With the advent of educational technology trends, Luckesi (2005, p. 31) emphasizes that the methodological approach to education has taken precedence, to the detriment of the philosophical, political, and epistemological aspects of education, according to the documentary analysis of Decree No. 477 (Brazil, 1969b): "Mastery of planning techniques, especially teaching techniques, began to form the backdrop for educational practice."

In regulating the organization and operation of higher education, Law No. 5,540 (Brazil, 1968b) also emphasized vocational training, as exemplified in Article 1, which outlines the main objectives of that educational level—research, development of sciences, literature, and the arts, and training of university professionals. and Article 40, which emphasizes the importance of civic education and sports, guides institutions in this sphere to encourage activities with this focus and promote civic education, considered essential to building awareness of the rights and duties of citizens and professionals.

With these legal provisions, the government primarily intended to internationalize the economy by partnering with American multinationals; opening factories, industries, and businesses; increasing consumption; and creating/disseminating the American way of life in Brazil. To this end, it tasked schools with training professionals and skilled labor to fill job market vacancies. Several authors have argued that the 1964 coup was planned from Washington, such as journalist and historian Morel (1965) in his book "*O golpe começou em Washington*."

It was believed that the Americans intended to seize most of Brazil's national heritage (state-owned companies, cheap labor, and natural resources); that there was direct military and political interference by the United States in Brazil; and that they helped install General Castello Branco as president to facilitate that country's entry into Brazilian territory.

The strategy, of course, was outlined from the outset, as industrialization, promoted with the help of American capital, would be accompanied by the militarization of society, with the consequent perpetuation of the generals in power.

In the background, there was the de-ideologization and depoliticization of education to create a culture alienated from social struggles, with which the government hoped to neutralize opposition. The plan was to promote restrictions, limitations, and reductions in political debate in the general spheres of education and "stifle" pedagogical activity in an atmosphere of scientific teaching. In this context, science would be the only valid knowledge, with only knowledge subjected to scientific-technological purposes being valued, which inhibited political and sociological studies considered biased and subversive.

The predominance of the economistic conception of education—which views teaching as an investment, a value to be recovered eventually—resulted in the elimination of political awareness, the stifling of critical thinking, and the curtailment of ideological opposition to the regime. In this regard, Ghiraldelli (2002) recalls the disconnect between theory and practice in technicist didactics, something reinforced in the pedagogical formula focused on the acquisition of "techniques," in which the student acts as a mere instrument and receiver, executing instructional objectives guided by information contained in textbooks.

From this perspective, the link between school and the job market aimed to "occupy students' minds" with practical issues, discouraging reflection, and preventing the full development of critical thinking. In this sense, Ghiraldelli (2002) recalls the statements of Minister Roberto Campos who, in a lecture about education and economic development, defended the need to align the area with market demands, having proposed a rigorous entrance exam for higher education courses that did not meet labor needs, claiming that the student unrest at the time was caused by an education system that was distant from market demands and focused on general education. Generalities, without proper practical application – this left leisure spaces filled with "political adventures."

Starting in 1967, policies based on the technocratic model began to directly impact the school structure, such as the reformulation of student representation. According to Aranha (1989), organizations seen as subversive, such as the *União Nacional dos Estudantes* (UNE), were promptly declared illegal, restricting representation to more local levels and allowing only the *Diretório Acadêmico* (DA) in each program and the *Diretório Central dos Estudantes* (DCE) in universities to act, while any political activity was strictly prohibited to reinforce the idea that students should study, and workers should work.

The military adopted direct control of secondary schools, regarding faculty and staff, as well as the content taught in the classroom. To serve these interests, they transformed student unions into civic centers; created and imposed the subject of *Educação Moral e Cívica*, mandatory at all levels and educational modalities, beginning with Decree-Law No. 869 of September 12, 1969 (Brazil, 1969d). This subject served as a pamphlet-like education, promoting and defending the military regime. It also instilled in students a supposed patriotism and loyalty to the country, which was merely a spirit of subordination and submission to the dictatorship, passivity, obedience, and insensitivity to the real social problems purposefully left unsolved by the regime.

In secondary education, *Educação Moral e Cívica* was called *Organização Social e Política Brasileira* (OSPB), and in higher education, it was called *Estudo dos Problemas Brasileiros* (EPB). The teaching position for the subject in question would be filled by a trusted individual appointed by the school principal, rather than through a public selection process. This position would be filled by the *Departamento de Ordem Política e Social* (DEOPS), an organization that, in the words of Aranha (1989, p. 552), "controlled people's participation in protest movements, labeling those deemed subversive as communists."

In line with AI-5 (Brazil, 1968a), which granted the president broad powers over the executive and legislative branches, in addition to suspending individual rights, Decree No. 477 (Brazil, 1969b) prohibited any political demonstrations in educational institutions involving teachers, students, and staff. Aranha (1989) observes that, under the pretext of investigating

subversive activities, a climate of terror was established in universities, with arbitrary processes resulting in the dismissal or forced retirement of faculty members—many of whom sought exile in other countries, while those who remained faced censorship and denunciations, severely damaging academic and cultural life in Brazil.

Technical education ideals, such as rationality and efficiency, mirrored the organization of factories or companies. In practice, this translated into planning meetings that defined detailed instructional objectives to avoid ambiguous interpretations. In this context, the professor acted as a technician and was assisted by other technicians, focusing on transmitting technical and objective knowledge. Adapting teaching to the Taylorist model required planning, specialization of functions, and bureaucratization to maximize efficiency and productivity (Aranha, 1989).

However, the author argues that technicism failed to be effectively implemented in educational institutions because, in practice, teachers remained "attached" to traditional trends or imbued with New School ideas, even though, on paper, they were forced to submit to numerous bureaucratic procedures.

Aranha (1989, p. 554) points out the consequences effectively achieved by technicism, such as "excessive bureaucratization of teaching, because, to control activities, there were countless requirements to fill out paperwork"; "rigid separation between conception and execution of work"; reduction of the teacher to an executor of tasks organized by the planning department; and the notion that the excellence of technical means could relegate the teaching role to a secondary role.

As Saviani (1993) observed, technicism harmed the educational sphere by excessively prioritizing means, such as techniques, methods, and tools, to the detriment of the field's objectives. This focus on operational aspects diverted scarce resources from activities that should be central to the educational process, such as the student's comprehensive development and critical training, to merely administrative and technical tasks, which compromised quality and results in this context.

Technicist Pedagogy and the Educational Model in the Military Regime Context

In 1969, a new period of pedagogical ideas began in Brazil in the context of the 1964 Revolution, with the military coup d'état and the establishment of the military dictatorship in the country. This resulted in a new political and institutional crisis that began to emerge in the early 1960s, when the exhaustion of the economic model made it impossible to respond to populist demands focused on redistribution.

Social tensions were rising, and Cold War geopolitics began to react, and even special projects, such as the Superintendence for the *Superintendência do Desenvolvimento do Nordeste* (SUDENE), failed to alleviate socioeconomic contradictions. Rejection of social injustices grew, with questions about the presence of North American capital in the country, accused of neocolonial exploitation.

From the perspective of foreign capital, especially from North America, the liberal democratic regime, with its participatory networks, was not sufficiently stable to contain the pressures emanating from the less privileged classes, reinforced by the populist pact and threatening the accumulation process.

Controlling these groups became necessary, and the United States of America (USA) did not hesitate to use any means possible to pressure the official, semi-official, or private institutions responsible for the policy of global control of finance, education, science, research, media, and the military. Internally, the military blamed populist governments for economic failure and social insubordination, and upon finding support from old fascist forces, they ended the disorder through the 1964 *Coup D'état*.

Fueled by the military's aspirations and frustrations, supposedly approved by the masses, and supported by the financing and collaboration of business groups linked to monopoly capital, the 1964 coup d'état institutionalized an authoritarian pact between the technocracy and the international bourgeoisie, aiming for the social and economic reorganization necessary to maintain capitalism and the model of economic internationalization.

The 1964 Revolution culminated in Brazil's incorporation into North American culture, the implementation of which primarily requires social peace. To this end, the Brazilian state fought, starting in 1964, to eliminate significant elements of popular movements, civil society organizations, and representative power, promoting the reorganization of the economy and the overcoming of nationalist ideology.

This process of reorganization of the country profoundly affected the Brazilian educational system, as the ideology of development based on order, which guided the new regime's actions, viewed educational problems within very narrow boundaries. Cultural production was monitored with the idea that cultural educational organizations favored subversive and communist-sympathetic elements.

Thus, the 1964 *Coup D'état* ended the popular education movements of the 1960s and stifled debate on the subject with revocations, exiles, persecutions, torture, and the destruction of Marxist-inspired literature. With this depoliticization, schools were criticized for their poor performance, their inability to train the human resources necessary for development, and their high degree of politicization, and were blamed for the problems facing the country.

It was necessary to reform schools and provide them with the tools necessary for development. The authoritarian regime turned to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as a means of intervening in Brazilian education, disguised as technical assistance. During this period, it assumed a unique role by promoting a denationalization of education in Brazil.

In this sense, the humanist culture, of European tradition, began to be seen as an obstacle to the spread of technocratic elements. The ideal was to end the old cultural ethos, of Catholic and Iberian origin, which privileged the humanities, and replace it with a more Calvinist one, which encouraged industrial values and favored dynamic professions by being closely linked to the process of economic development.

This process was concretized by the MEC-USAID agreements (1964-1968), which affected the Brazilian education system (elementary, secondary, and higher education), the coordination between the various levels, teacher training, and the production and circulation of textbooks. Technicist pedagogy was introduced in Brazil through these agreements and ended the long hegemony exercised by the new education. Thus, according to the social reorganization program launched by the authoritarian regime of 1964, technicist pedagogy guides the restriction of the educational system, with the declared objective of placing education at the service of development of the country. Therefore, teaching discourse and practice are conceived from the perspective of economics, whose key words are efficiency and productivity, reflecting the concern with providing a functional aspect to schoolwork.

Inspired by the principles of behaviorism, technicist pedagogy seeks, in learning, behavioral changes and, as such, a response to external stimuli, controlled by reinforcement. Here, education controls individual behavior regarding pre-established goals, where the school's success or failure in achieving these objectives directly relates to the knowledge of the natural laws that govern the organism's physical reactions in learning and the control of the variables that affect it in this context.

The Laws No. 5,540 and 5,692 (Brazil, 1968; 1971) mark the introduction of technicist pedagogy in Brazil, reforming all levels of education, from elementary to higher education. This legislation, based on the aforementioned assumptions, plunges the country's education into a vast ocean of objectivity, functionality, taxonomy, and technicality, which

affects even the most modest educational institutions. Such actions provide intriguing models such as the systemic approach, programmed instruction, teaching machines, microphones, and Distance Learning (EaD).

To produce certain psychosocial and physical states in students and enable the achievement of specific learning objectives, it seems necessary to coordinate and rationalize the process, which led to the creation of a management body. In this case, school organization acquired unprecedented importance in the history of education in Brazil.

Beginning in 1930, the process of bureaucratization assumed dimensions never before seen, in which the main element of education became the rational organization of resources. Teachers and students play a secondary role, relegated to the role of executors of a process whose design, planning, coordination, and control are the responsibility of supposedly competent, neutral, objective, and impartial experts.

Stripped of their authority and tasked with tasks that, if necessary, could be performed according to an instructional scheme or textbook, teachers become impoverished in terms of their training and salary. As for students, the concern with adapting them to the work and the valorization of know-how lead to a lack of individuality, as they are subject to standardized instruction based on previously formulated plans to which different discipline modalities and pedagogical practices are adjusted.

Technical pedagogy was not well received by the teaching staff, as some educators remained faithful to traditional and New School proposals, while others expressed discontent by taking refuge in anti-pedagogical perspectives that challenged the didactic debate (theories of non-directivity, the "end of school," and critical reproduction). However, the authoritarian regime's policies allowed technocratic pedagogy to exert a profound influence on the Brazilian school system, contributing "[...] to increasing chaos in the field of education, reaching such a level of discontinuity and fragmentation that it makes educational work practically impossible" (Saviani, 1993, p. 17).

In this context, student achievement and dropout and failure rates increased. According to data from the 1980 demographic census, between 1968 and 1975, of the 100 students enrolled in the first year of elementary school, only 16 completed the course. These data call into question the effectiveness of the educational model and threaten the stability of the political system, as it is no longer possible to mask the effects of foreign capitalism in a non-independent country.

The technicist equipment of the school

Given the above, the following characteristics of pedagogical technicism can be highlighted: scientific neutrality and objectivity, in which political awareness is inhibited and discouraged; a focus on professionalization, aimed at integrating Brazilian society into international capitalism and with prospects for economic growth, in which the school absorbs the values and worldview of the business world; and civic education, marked by the regime's propaganda to perpetuate its power and neutralize opposition.

According to Kuenzer (1989), the technicist ideology of education, promoted during the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil, was a response to the need to train a workforce to meet the demands of the expanding industrial market. Schools began to legitimize the division of labor and naturalize social inequalities, where technicist education reinforced the vision of teaching oriented toward the development of technical skills, reducing the role of institutions to preparing workers for work.

This perspective can be understood based on the concept of social control understood, according to Foucault (2014, p. 163), as "a set of disciplinary devices aimed at normalizing behaviors and producing subjectivities aligned with the needs of established power." This aspect is corroborated by Cohen (1985, p. 22), who states that "control mechanisms are not limited to direct repression, but operate in a diffuse and legitimate manner" – similarly, Scull (1989) observes that these practices, under the guise of technical neutrality, shape behaviors and restrict critical thinking.

The critique of educational technicism deepens with the reflections of Kuenzer (1989) and Bobbio (1997), as both help to reveal the shift of education, when shaped by this perspective, from emancipatory functions to an instrument of social control that reinforces and perpetuates structural inequalities. Kuenzer (1989, p. 52-53) even emphasizes that "the technicist approach tends to reduce teaching to mere mechanical processes of knowledge transmission, in which student development is viewed through the lens of productivity and efficiency." Indeed, this utilitarian view ignores the social and cultural dimensions of learning and leads to a lack of interest in critical-reflective aspects fundamental to the formation of conscious and active citizens.

In turn, Bobbio (1997) emphasizes the relevance of the educational sphere as a space for debate and the formation of democratic values. However, under the influence of technicism and educational policies conceived as instruments of social control, schools tend to prioritize obedience and conformity, moving away from a critical education capable of challenging existing power structures. In Brazil, as Mansan (2014) points out, this process was intrinsically linked to surveillance and cultural repression during the regime, shaping the educational sphere with a strategic bias toward maintaining the authoritarian order.

The technocratic rigging of schools is a phenomenon that expresses the educational system's adherence to a model of technical rationality, which prioritizes objectivity and efficiency to the detriment of other fundamental dimensions of the educational process. This approach transforms education into a mere tool for training human resources for the job market, where learning is often reduced to measurable and quantifiable outcomes. By focusing on efficiency, such an institution aims to maximize student productivity and equate the educational environment with a production line that not only disregards the student's comprehensive development (which should encompass ethical, critical, and creative aspects), but also ignores the needs and social spheres of each individual. Thus, education becomes a mechanism that reproduces, rather than challenges, the social and economic inequalities that characterize society.

This adherence to the model of technical rationality is deeply rooted in the reproduction of a stratified social order. The educational structure, by adopting management principles that reflect business logic, tends to favor those with cultural and social capital, while marginalizing groups facing economic and social barriers. In a technocratic school, the privileged consolidate their advantages and perpetuate a cycle of exclusion and inequality.

Therefore, criticism of the technocratic apparatus of such an institution is not limited to the analysis of educational methods and practices, but extends to a reflection on the role of education, which must be seen as a field of possibilities to challenge power structures and promote social transformation, rather than conforming to a logic that perpetuates stratification. Thus, the true mission of educational establishments must be to develop critical individuals who are aware of their own role in society, empowered not only to enter the job market, but also to question, transform, and build a fair and egalitarian reality.

Intensified in Brazil with the 1968 reform, pedagogical technicism aimed to instrumentalize education as a means of ensuring the qualifications of the workforce, necessary for the development of capitalism. For Saviani (1993), the emphasis is on the development of technical skills and scientific neutrality. These aspects, while seemingly neutral, conceal a political project that relegates critical and humanistic education to schools, making them spaces for the reproduction of inequalities, since it legitimizes class division through market-oriented education.

In this sense, Arroyo (2000) criticizes the subordination of education to market and state demands, emphasizing that technicism reinforces an instrumental view of teaching, whose focus on efficiency and productivity disregards the subject of learning and undermines the pedagogical meaning of schools. Instead of promoting emancipatory and civic education, they have become ideological devices that naturally it exacerbates social inequalities and limits the transformative potential of the educational process.

Freitas (1991) complements this criticism by pointing out that educational technicism, promoted by the military regime, sought to ensure governability and political stability through education. By emphasizing technical and professional training, technicist education depoliticized students and distanced them from critical reflection on the social conditions in which they lived, consolidating a power project aimed at maintaining the current order. The curriculum was guided by economic and political interests, which relegated integral human development to the background.

Furthermore, Ghiraldelli (2002) emphasizes that pedagogical technicism is not exclusive to Brazil but reflects a global trend, especially during the 20th century, of subordinating education to the demands of the international capitalist system. Technicist ideology manifests itself in educational policies that prioritize the teaching of technical skills and specific competencies over critical training, reducing education to the training of workers adaptable to the market. This social control strategy focuses on immediate and measurable results, but disregards the complexity of the educational process and hinders the development of critical and autonomous individuals.

The emphasis on developing utilitarian competencies and skills diverts attention from the ethical, social, and cultural values that should be at the core of the educational process. Therefore, education becomes perceived as an investment resulting in financial returns, reducing the richness of learning to quantitative parameters that serve market interests.

Furthermore, educational technicism, by prioritizing an instrumental approach to knowledge, contributes to the depoliticization of the school environment. As stated elsewhere, the development of critical citizens engaged in social issues is relegated to the background in favor of technical preparation aligned with market demands. This dynamic can result in an educational system that not only reproduces but also intensifies social inequalities, as opportunities for access to quality education are often tied to pre-existing socioeconomic conditions.

Therefore, the debate on educational technicism must be broad and comprehensive, based on the role of education in society and its function as a space for the integral development of the individual. This field must be redefined as a right and public good, committed not only to the production of a qualified workforce but also to active and responsible citizenship, capable of questioning power structures and fighting for a just and equitable society.

Clearly, the technical nature of technicist pedagogy reduces education to a mechanistic process, in which the purported neutrality and objectivity function as mere illusions and conceal deep ideological interests. According to Freitas (1991), this approach not only ignores the intrinsic political dimensions of education but also promotes students' conformity to the current system, rather than encouraging them to develop a critical and autonomous consciousness.

In his work "*Educação e Tecnologia: um enfoque crítico*," Freitas (1995) reflects on the uncritical adoption of technologies in education, emphasizing them as a field of struggle rather than neutral data. This statement reveals that technologies and pedagogical methods can perpetuate social inequalities if not critically questioned and contextualized. Freitas (1998) further expands about this approach by highlighting the urgency of rethinking current pedagogical practices, advocating for a didactic approach that truly considers students' reality and experiences.

For the researcher, a critical didactic approach must question the power relations manifested in the classroom and promote the emancipation of individuals, something that directly opposes the technocratic model, which, in turn, tends to disregard students' social and historical context, focusing on the mechanical transmission of content in a decontextualized and superficial manner.

It is essential to understand education as a dynamic and plural space, in which critical and reflective dialogues are fostered. This reconfiguration requires a pedagogical practice that goes beyond preparing students for the job market, but also empowers them to question and transform the reality in which they live.

As an instrument of emancipation, critical awareness can be cultivated and social justice promoted by resisting the attempts at control and conformity imposed by the technocratic model, which, by prioritizing efficiency and standardization, ignores the nuances of individual experiences to achieve an education that reproduces inequalities and limits students' critical development. Therefore, the proposal by Freitas et al. (2000) emphasizes the pedagogical perspective it recognizes and values the voices of students, aiming for a fair and inclusive environment.

In this vein, Nóvoa (1991) asserts that technicality disregards the complexity of teaching and reduces the teacher's role to a mere executor of techniques and content. This instrumental view impoverishes pedagogical practice and alienates teachers from their role as agents of change, committed to the comprehensive development of students. For the author, it is necessary to reclaim the human and critical dimension of education and break with the technical paradigm that dominates educational policies.

By prioritizing principles such as technical rationality, control, and predictability of educational outcomes, the technical approach treats the educational process mechanically and linearly. This means it views teaching as a sequence of standardized and predictable steps, in which each action has an expected and measurable outcome. In this model, the teacher is seen as an executor of techniques and methods, while the student is treated as a passive receiver of knowledge.

Thus, the technicist approach, by reducing teaching to standardized and predictable procedures, disregards the richness and complexity of educational interactions, neglecting essential aspects such as critical thinking, creativity, and integral human development. By prioritizing technical efficiency, it ignores students' subjectivity, their different ways of learning, and the importance of teaching that promotes autonomy and reflection. This model, by focusing exclusively on quantifiable results, fails to empower individuals to act critically and as citizens in society. Overcoming technicism requires a vision that balances technique with a humanizing, inclusive, and transformative education.

By focusing solely on controlling results and the predictability of academic performance, technicism ignores the diversity of students' experiences, their subjectivities, and the socioeconomic and cultural context in which they are inserted. Thus, this reductionist view fails to consider human interactions, creativity, critical thinking, and the unpredictable dynamics that are part of the educational process.

Within this technicist logic, "teaching planning and assessment began to be organized based on productivity and efficiency criteria, subordinating the school curriculum to the economic interests of the time," according to Enricone; Sant'Anna; Turra (1995). This means that education was reconfigured to primarily meet the demand for skilled labor, without considering the social, cultural, and critical aspects of the individuals involved in the educational process. Thus, education became a means of adapting to the job market, while critical training and reflection were relegated to the background.

This technicist perspective, far from being neutral, reinforced established power structures, using education as an instrument of ideological control. As Enricone, Sant'Anna, and Turra (1995) state, "technicism serves to shape behaviors and form passive subjects, trained to fulfill predetermined functions within the productive system" (p. 73). This model ignored the transformative potential of education, restricting it to a merely instrumental field.

Final considerations

During the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil, educational technicality was more than a simple pedagogical approach, having become an instrument of control and legitimization of an authoritarian power project. While not neutral or impartial, this approach sustained the regime's logic, as evidenced by historical documents that reveal propaganda and censorship in schools, as well as the persecution of any form of dissent, including teachers, students, and intellectuals. The slogan "*Brasil: ame-o ou deixe-o*" encapsulated the need for conformity, treating resistance as a threat to economic development and national progress.

However, technicality backfired on the military because, although they focused intensely on technical and scientific issues, they ignored the relevance of the cultural struggles unfolding in schools and universities. This reductionist view underestimated the importance of education as a space of resistance and facilitated the emergence of an organized opposition that used the arts and culture as its primary weapons against the regime.

Educational reforms implemented during this period, such as the higher education reform in 1968 and the primary and secondary education reforms in 1971, directly reflected the technocratic ideology, as they aimed to ensure an education focused on efficiency and modernization, but their true nature was deeply political. By institutionalizing a credit system and fragmented management, these initiatives hindered student mobilization and the formation of cohesive groups, reinforcing the idea that education should prepare individuals merely to be cogs in the productive machinery, which alienated them from critical thinking and action.

In this context, international aid reinforced this vision, especially through agreements such as the MEC-USAID agreement, by molding students into trainable workers, subordinated to the logic of competitiveness and private property, without questioning the role of education in shaping critical citizens.

By prioritizing principles such as technical rationality, control, and predictability of educational outcomes, the technicist approach treated the educational process mechanically and linearly. That is, teaching as a sequence of standardized and predictable steps, in which each action yields an expected and measurable result. In this model, the teacher is seen as an executor of techniques and methods, while the student is treated as a passive recipient of knowledge.

By reducing teaching to standardized and predictable procedures, the technicist approach disregards the richness and complexity of educational interactions, neglecting essential aspects such as critical thinking, creativity, and integral human development. By

prioritizing technical efficiency, it ignores students' subjectivity, their different ways of learning, and teaching designed for autonomy and reflection.

Therefore, centered on technical rationality, control, and the predictability of results, the technicist approach treats the educational process in a reductionist and mechanistic manner. Teaching is viewed as standardized and controllable steps, in which each action indicates a previously established outcome.

Thus, pedagogical technicality, which emerged during the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil, consolidated itself as an educational approach that subordinated teaching to the demands of efficiency and productivity imposed by the regime and the logic of economic development.

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