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On-demand curriculum and digital platforms: control and heteronomy of teaching work[1]

Currículo sob demanda e plataformas digitais: controle e heteronomia do trabalho docente

Currículo bajo demanda y plataformas digitales: control y heteronomía del trabajo docente

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Abstract: This article analyses the impacts of the introduction of digital platforms in the São Paulo state education network, arguing that this process, under a discourse of innovation and pedagogical modernisation, works as a mechanism for intensifying precarious teaching work and privatising state education. Grounded in qualitative documentary and bibliographic analysis, this research demonstrates how curricular reforms have created the conditions for permanent flexibility, shaping an on-demand curriculum that serves the Edtech industry's interests, instrumentalising digital platforms as mechanisms of control and heteronomy, subordinating teaching work to the logic of capital.
Keywords: Curriculum; Teaching work; Digital platforms; Educational reforms; Technocentrism.

Resumo: Este artigo analisa os impactos da introdução de plataformas digitais na rede estadual de educação de São Paulo, argumentando que este processo, sob o discurso da inovação e modernização pedagógica, atua como um mecanismo de intensificação e precarização do trabalho docente e de privatização da educação estatal. A pesquisa, de natureza qualitativa, baseia-se em análise documental e bibliográfica, demonstrando como as reformas curriculares criaram as condições para uma flexibilização permanente, conformando um currículo sob demanda, que atende aos interesses da indústria *Edtech*, instrumentalizando as plataformas digitais em mecanismos de controle e heteronomia, subordinando o trabalho docente à lógica do capital.
Palavras-chave: Currículo; Trabalho docente; Plataformas digitais; Reformas educacionais; Tecnocentrismo.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza los impactos de la introducción de plataformas digitales en la red de enseñanza del estado de São Paulo, argumentando que este proceso, bajo un discurso

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de innovación y modernización pedagógica, funciona como un mecanismo para intensificar la precarización del trabajo docente y la privatización de la educación estatal. Fundamentada en un análisis documental y bibliográfico cualitativo, esta investigación demuestra cómo las reformas curriculares han creado las condiciones para una flexibilidad permanente, configurando un currículo bajo demanda que sirve a los intereses de la industria Edtech, instrumentalizando las plataformas digitales como mecanismos de control y heteronomía, subordinando el trabajo docente a la lógica del capital.
Palabras clave: Currículo; Trabajo docente; Plataformas digitales; Reformas educativas; Tecnocentrismo.

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Introduction

The massive introduction of digital technologies characterizes the current phase of capitalist development. *Big Data*, Internet of Things (*IoT*), datafication, hyperconnectivity, systems integration, cloud computing, and Artificial Intelligence are expressions that have become part of the lexicon necessary for understanding the dynamics of wealth accumulation at the global level. Despite the emergence of concepts and categories that place this new dynamic in a post-capitalist scenario, we start from the understanding that we are still facing the same social metabolism of capital, based on private ownership of the means of production and class exploitation (Saura *et al.*, 2024). In this sense, the analyses undertaken here understand that the phenomenon of the introduction of digital technologies and platforms in education in Brazil is situated in the context of dependent capitalism, in which the countries of the so-called Global South—or periphery of the capitalist system—are embeded in an unequal and subordinate dynamic in relation to the countries at the center of capitalism.

It is worth noting that the expansion of information and communication technologies has been linked to mechanisms of capital control over the subaltern classes throughout the 20th century. The post-World War II scenario reveals the maintenance—and expansion—of military spending and spending on information and communication networks, especially in the context of the Cold War, but above all as a weapon of war against emancipatory perspectives that challenge the logic of capital and as a means of control over the population. It is also digital technologies that have expanded the systems of defense of capital ownership, since they respond to the discipline imposed by the sphere of financial accumulation, that is, the dominance that financial capital establishes in its new accumulation strategies using digital technologies as a

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vehicle. In this sense, it can be said that these technologies radicalize the process by which real accumulation, based on material production, is subordinated to fictitious accumulation, operating to obliterate relations of labor exploitation and dependence.

At the same time, the emergence of these new digital technologies is linked to the construction and consolidation of new socio-technical imaginaries (Jasanoff; Kim, 2015 *apud* Saura *et al.*, 2024) that outline dreamlike scenarios of the future in which technology is the crucial element for development and progress. In the same vein, we observe the process of reification (Marx, 2013) of social relations and interactions mediated and subordinated by technology (Faustino; Lippold, 2022). In another context, these reflections occupied an important space in the work of Herbert Marcuse (1982), who points to the emergence of a technological rationality engendered by the advancement of industrial society, which is characterized by maximum efficiency and productivity to the same extent that it subordinates the individual to the technical-scientific apparatus. Similarly, Postman (1994) points to the fact that the development of capitalism has created technopolies, allowing technology to dominate culture, replacing traditions and belief systems with a logic of efficiency and technical progress.

The Covid-19 pandemic created a kind of Overton Window[4] so that some ideas, previously considered unthinkable, could become acceptable and even natural to common sense. From the emergence of new forms of work to the reconfiguration of traditional work activities, the health crisis of 2020 has accelerated trends in the field of education that had already been underway for decades. These transformations have direct effects on the organization of pedagogical work, teaching methodologies, and the very structure of educational institutions.

Digital technologies, often presented as a salvation for all educational problems, reflect an uncritical enchantment with techno-scientific innovations, a kind of "wonder" (Vieira Pinto, 2005), a phenomenon which, like the commodity fetish analyzed by Marx in *Capital* (2013), masks the social relations involved in the production of these devices, as well as the interests that drive their development. The fetishization of technology also refers to the way in which human labor, under capitalism, is dominated by technology—which, ultimately, is crystallized human labor, or, as Marx defines it, dead labor embodied in machines.

[4] The Overton Window is a theoretical concept that describes how ideas initially considered unacceptable can become widely discussed and even adopted in the public sphere. According to this theory, in every society there is a range of opinions and proposals that are seen as viable and legitimate, called a "window." This window is not fixed and can expand or contract according to changes in the historical context, social, cultural, and economic pressures, and, above all, the influence of leaders and organized groups (Aragão, 2024).

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The digital transformation in education is intrinsically linked to current educational reforms. The National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) and the High School Reform, implemented through a Provisional Measure during the Temer (MDB) administration in 2016, both the result of direct articulation with the business sector (Tarlau; Moeller, 2020; Freitas, 2022), present a complementarity between standardization and curricular flexibility (Goulart; Alencar, 2021), facilitating the standardization of content and pedagogical approaches, while introducing "standardized flexibility." This process created the ideal conditions for the massive implementation of digital learning platforms in the educational system (Barbosa; Alves, 2023; Normanha; Aroni, 2025).

The São Paulo state network saw the São Paulo Education Media Center (CMSP) as a symbol of the permanent adoption of digital technologies that emerged during the pandemic. With Tarcísio de Freitas (Republicans) in office since 2023 and Renato Feder as Secretary of Education, this digitization process has been intensified, continuing the policies initiated under the Dória (PSDB) administration. The transformation ranges from school management—such as attendance monitoring—to teaching practices. Although the government presents digitization as a panacea for old problems in public education—dropout rates, poor performance, and school violence—the failure to address the social roots of these issues makes the measures insufficient, as the results in São Paulo already show (GEPUD; REPU, 2025).

In this sense, the following question arises: how do the digital technologies and platforms imposed on the São Paulo state school system contribute to the precariousness of teaching work and the privatization of state education? Thus, based on the above, this article aims to analyze the impacts of the introduction of digital platforms on the precariousness of teaching work and the pedagogical organization of the São Paulo state school system, considering the prescriptive and control aspects of teaching work.

To this end, we first analyze how curricular reforms promote, through flexibilization, the opening of spaces for the introduction of platforms, investigating the influence of this flexibilization and digitization on the planning and execution of classes. Subsequently, based on official documents, the technological determinism present in these guidelines is discussed, demonstrating how these platforms function as instruments of control over teaching work.

This is a qualitative investigation based on the documentary analysis of educational policies and information from the official communication and dissemination channels of the State Department of Education, as well as reports and articles published in the press, and a critical review of the literature on teaching work, educational reforms, public policies, and technologies.

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Digital platforms and on-demand curriculum: totalitarian flexibility

The way in which educational reforms are implemented in the São Paulo state public school system has peculiarities, pointing to an accelerated process of integration between curricular flexibility and the insertion of digital educational technologies. It should be noted that, despite the apparent discontinuity in educational policies in the state, due to their experimental nature, this aspect constitutes an element of continuity. The design of these experiments expressed by educational reforms is marked by mechanisms of control and heteronomy of teaching work, which are significantly intensified with the massive insertion of digital platforms. These technologies enhance the fragmentation and verticalization of pedagogical work, articulating it with a pre-existing system of goals and results. What changes, therefore, is not the logic underlying the reforms, but the acceleration of the process of control over teaching work and the more direct subordination of pedagogical content and practices to the technological machinery and, consequently, to the producers and owners of these tools. This dynamic can be understood from the dialectic between continuities and discontinuities: although the phenomenal expression of these transformations suggests constant change for teachers in the network, such changes operate without modifying the already established meaning, reproducing and deepening the same control relationships.

Since 2020, based on the Inova Educação Program, the result of direct action by the Ayrton Senna Institute (IAS), in conjunction with the Volkswagen Foundation and other business institutes (Goulart; Alencar, 2021), the curriculum has been reorganized at all stages of education (including early childhood education), introducing new curricular components, paving the way for permanent curricular change, and driving the incorporation of new educational goods, including digital platforms (Fenselau, 2024). Although the program was discontinued under the Feder/Tarcísio administration, curriculum flexibility did not cease. On the contrary, between 2020 and 2025 alone, there were six different curricula in the network (GEPUD; REPU, 2023) at all stages of education, corroborating an experimental dimension, increasing teachers' insecurity about their workday, and reinforcing heteronomy, since there is no predictability about the subjects and their content.

The fluidity of curricula is accompanied by the frenetic introduction of digital educational platforms, which in 2025 will total thirty-one, with a direct or indirect impact on teaching work (GEPUD; REPU, 2025). The rapid modernization of schools in the São Paulo state network, in an authoritarian manner, outlines a radical process of changing school

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practices, focusing on the control of teaching work, now determined by the *EdTech* industry[5] (Saura *et al*, 2024; Seki, 2025). In this context, it is necessary to go beyond the terms of efficiency and effectiveness of digital technologies (Selwyn, 2017) to ask whether state education is not becoming yet another space for the production and accumulation of wealth, where companies supplying teaching materials, teaching systems, digital technologies, assessments, and consulting services can operate without restraint.

In this sense, there are two emblematic cases, such as the "Technology and Robotics" and "Acceleration for College Entrance Exams" components, which exemplify how curricular changes are organically linked to *Edtechs*, aiming to serve the interests of an educational market, subordinating state education, student training, and teaching work directly to the control of large business groups linked to financial markets.

The "Technology and Robotics" component was a pioneer in establishing the compulsory use of a digital platform since 2023 (Krawczyk; Jacomini, 2024), prescribing teaching work to monitor student access to the Alura programming platform, currently owned by the Alun Group (Brigatto, 2025), which is directly related to the interests of the financial market. Teachers of the subject, who until mid-2023 had curriculum guidelines and teaching materials related to the "Technology and Innovation" component, now have their activities prescribed with the mandatory development of classes on the Alura platform, shifting teaching work to technical assistance for students in terms of passwords, access, and monitoring of activities carried out on the platform.

Another similar case is the "Acceleration for College Entrance Exams" component, added to the curriculum in 2024 by SEDUC Resolution No. 52, dated November 16, 2023 (São Paulo, 2023), which determined three weekly classes (during regular daytime hours) for the 3rd year of high school, with no prior curriculum guidelines[6] and with the compulsory use of *the Me Salva!* online prep course platform in all classes.

The activities on the platform were individual, based on "learning tracks," which included video lessons that students were required to watch simultaneously, followed by exercises. Mandatory access to the platform required schools to purchase individual

[5] The term *EdTech*, although polysemic, ranges from technological infrastructure and resources to market segments, academic debates, and corporate interests. In this discussion, in line with Seki (2025), we highlight its unifying element: all its manifestations are socially produced—an essential condition for its existence, availability, and dynamism in the educational process. In capitalism, this implies its production as a commodity, which is why we focus on the digital educational technology industry as our analytical core.

[6] Other components do not have curriculum guidelines, such as Financial Education, Writing and Reading, and Study Guidance. The guidelines for teachers are the slides for each class available in the CMSP Repository, in Digital Materials.

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headphones for students to follow the platform, qualitatively altering a pedagogical moment that was supposed to be face-to-face and collective. Teachers who taught the subject in the classroom were tasked with monitoring, through the Painel Escola Total (Total School Panel), the *Business Intelligence* (BI) system of the State of São Paulo, whether students were accessing and meeting the goals set by the platform itself. [7]The compulsory use of *the Me Salva!* platform points to the subordination of the entire educational process, from content and methodologies to forms of assessment, to the online prep course platform owned by Arco Educação, a large educational oligopoly considered a Brazilian technological unicorn (Seki, 2023).

For 2025, Seduc established a new curriculum (São Paulo, 2024), which did not include the Acceleration for College Entrance Exams component, and coincidentally, the *Me Salva!* platform ceased to operate, as explained on the platform's official website:

> [...] Arco Educação, the educational group that acquired *Me Salva!* in 2021, will incorporate our content and our platform into its educational solutions [...] this means that 2024 was the last year of operation for the online prep course (Me Salva!, 2025).

The platform reappears listed in the Educational Platforms Guidance Document (São Paulo, 2025a), dated January 2025, with the words "coming soon" in the title, and there is, as yet, no new official guidance for teachers. Thus, it is not yet possible to know whether the platform will resume mandatory operation in any subject, but it can be inferred that the relationship between the Department of Education and the group that owns the *Me Salva!* platform will continue.

The cases presented demonstrate that curricular reorganizations are accompanied by educational commodities, positioning digital technologies not as mediators or subsidiaries of teaching practice, but to effect direct control of work, holding teachers responsible for the results measured on the platforms. Thus, constant changes in curriculum matrices operationalize an on-demand curriculum, imposing certain content, methods, and educational practices, subsuming teaching work (Catini; Branco, 2022) and student training to the interests of educational capital, combined with a radical reorganization of educational processes.

[7] The term "unicorn," coined by *Cowboy Ventures* founder Aileen Lee, refers to companies that exceed $1 billion in market value. *Cowboy Ventures* is an investment fund focused on technology startups in the US (McGrath, 2024).

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Guidance documents and the prescription of teaching work

At the beginning of the 2025 school year, the São Paulo State Department of Education circulated the *Guiding Document: Educational Platforms*, updated in January of that same year. The circulation of the document strategically coincided with the Secretary of Education's participation in pedagogical planning meetings in schools, via *livestream* for teachers. In the video, some of the secretary's statements gained attention, especially because of the contradictions they revealed. In the secretary's words:

> What we want is results, results. So I'm not here to be nice, to smile, to say that we are all together and united and that everything will be fine and so on. The results need to happen in your school (...) so it will be the year of autonomy. Let's stop suggesting step by step, demanding step by step, because what we want is results. Mainly results in Saresp, results in Saeb, and everything I'm going to do this year, what to expect from the Secretariat this year is to support, provide the tools, and demand results. I'm going to demand results, so focus on the results (Momento Formativo, 2025).

The SEDUC-SP document, in turn, presents itself as a milestone in the modernization of public education in São Paulo by integrating digital platforms into everyday school life. Under the discourse of personalizing learning and strengthening teaching practices, the text reveals, upon closer analysis, an educational project that restricts pedagogical autonomy, empties the content of teaching work, and institutionalizes mechanisms of control and surveillance over teachers. The apparent technical neutrality of the guidelines hides a profound reconfiguration of the content of teaching work, which ceases to be a critical mediator of knowledge and becomes a manager of digital tools and performance data.

One of the relevant aspects revealed by the analysis of the document is the close articulation between curricular components and digital platforms, sometimes subjecting the very existence of the curricular component to the platform, as pointed out earlier. Each of the platforms presented is linked to a specific component for one or more segments of education (Early Elementary School, Late Elementary School, and High School). The Tarefa SP platform, because it is linked to the content of digital materials developed and offered by Seduc, is linked to various curricular components of Late Elementary School and High School[8] . There are also platforms and curricular

[8] Tarefa SP is linked to the following curriculum components: Art, History, Financial Education, Physical Education, Philosophy, Physics, English (6th and 7th grades), Geography, Biology, Portuguese Language, Sociology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Science (São Paulo, 2025).

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components that are aimed only at schools in the Full-Time Education Program (PEI), such as the Robotics platform.

The curricular flexibility presented above contrasts with the rigidity with which the document prescribes teaching activities through the use of platforms, with determinations for the mandatory use of standardized teaching sequences, prescribing the activities that teachers must perform before, during, and after classes. All platforms mentioned in the document include a list of tasks that teachers must perform, including training activities for the use of digital tools that must take place before classes, as well as specific planning activities for the platforms and evaluation of metrics computed by the Total School Panel - Super BI.

Regarding the prescription of activities for class time, in addition to monitoring student performance and verifying the completion of activities directly on the digital tools, the document provides guidelines related to filling in information on the platforms, such as recording classes.

There are also recommendations for activities to be carried out after class, such as analyzing performance reports generated by the platforms, correcting activities (including with the "help" of Artificial Intelligence, as in the case of Redação Paulista), and replanning activities for the continuity of the process.

Given the intensified use of digital platforms, teaching faces a paradox: while there is a depletion of its intellectual dimension, there is an overlap of tasks before, during, and after classes. This overload, aggravated by overcrowded classrooms and a scarcity of resources, including technological ones, results in longer working hours inside and outside the classroom.

In general, the prescription of activities for the use of platforms reduces, if not prohibits, the teacher's ability to adapt content to local realities. This is a set of guidelines that explicitly and deliberately seek to subject teaching activities to technological tools, as noted in the excerpt from the document on guidelines for using *Alura's Start* platform:

> We see the role of the programming teacher as that of a mediator of the different learning experiences present, both inside and outside the platforms. Therefore, it is SEDUC's duty to train teachers not only in the specific knowledge of the component, but also in teaching and assessment practices that **enable** them **to use the new tool,** plan, execute, and assess their students' performance during classes (São Paulo, 2025, p. 8, emphasis added).

There are also guidelines aimed at defining the composition of grades for curricular components linked to the platforms, ignoring the possibility of teachers

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evaluating complex learning processes and the adapted use of assessment tools that dialogue with the reality of each classroom.

Some of these platforms, such as *Khan Academy*, for example, although presented as an auxiliary tool for personalized teaching, contrast with the need for standardization and leveling imposed both by the metrics computed by the Painel Escola Total and by large-scale external assessments. One of the platform's features, highlighted in the document, is the self-correction of exercises with automated *feedback*. As mentioned, the use of the Redação Paulista platform also involves the correction of activities using Artificial Intelligence. These resources, presented as a "time-saver" for teachers, represent, on the other hand, a hollowing out of teaching activity, the teacher-student relationship, and the teaching-learning relationship. It is a technological dependency that weakens the creative and critical dimension of teaching, replacing it with an instrumental, mechanical, and automatic logic that prioritizes adherence to protocols over pedagogical reflection. Barreto (2020) reflects on this process, indicating a movement of partial technological replacement,

> [...] in which the teacher is not exactly removed from the scene, but is relegated to a secondary role, with their actions tentatively reduced to aspects such as managing the time needed to perform specific tasks, supported by materials conveyed in/by ICT (Barreto, 2020, p. 4)[9] .

At the same time, there is a hollowing out of the teaching profession, which now revolves around platform management rather than mediating the teaching-learning process and knowledge production. Teachers are encouraged to follow tutorials, monitor engagement reports, and comply with bureaucratic steps, while their intellectual function is relegated to the background. Automated correction of activities, present on platforms such as LEIA SP, and Matific's ready-made tracks minimize the need for original pedagogical planning, reducing teaching to a succession of technical tasks.

The document thus operates a contradiction: while demanding more from teachers (in terms of technological mastery and data collection), it devalues their capacity for critical analysis, judgment, and curricular adaptation. The most worrying aspect, however, is the institutionalization of a regime of surveillance over teachers' work.

The detailed reports provided by the platforms, in addition to being an auxiliary tool to guide teachers, are fundamentally a device for monitoring work and goal

[9] This same partial technological substitution can also be seen in the mandatory use of digital materials made available by SEDUC to teachers, which include icons indicating the time teachers should spend on each slide or activity in the material.

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achievement. The obligation to follow sequences, record lessons, and justify performance based on quantitative metrics engenders a coordinated system of constant pressure, surveillance, and harassment, where pedagogical freedom is sacrificed in the name of accountability through technical apparatus.

The results of this metrics system directly affect the stability of principals—as provided for in Resolution 12/2024 (São Paulo, 2025b)—and indirectly affect the assignment of classes to teachers. Although there is no explicit rule, the lack of transparency in the criteria allows managers to favor teachers who meet targets, marginalizing those who resist the tyranny of metrics. According to Afonso (2021), this is the emergence of digital *accountability*, a model transposed from business management that transforms education into a process of producing measurable results.

Thus, although the document presents itself as innovative, it consolidates a technocratic view of education that threatens the essence of teaching work. By replacing autonomy with standardized *scripts*, creativity with engagement metrics, and trust in teachers with surveillance systems, SEDUC-SP modernizes teaching, subordinating it to a managerial logic. The risk is that the "efficiency" required by the subordination of education to capital will radically transform the porosity of educational spaces, which carries the contradiction of the possibility of criticism and dialogue, and that teachers, crushed between platforms and reports, will see their profession reduced to an operational function.

Final considerations

Digital technologies function as monitoring tools, holding students and teachers accountable for quantifiable performance. The role of the teacher is reduced to that of a "platform tutor," responsible only for ensuring students' access to ready-made lessons and standardized exercises, with no autonomy over the content and how it will be addressed. Contrary to advertising, "pedagogical innovations" do not engage students, nor have they demonstrated efficiency within the parameters postulated by the Department of Education itself (GEPUD; REPU, 2025).

The teaching-learning process is emptied and the focus shifts to learning, minimizing the central role of teachers in the construction of knowledge. The metrification system, represented by the Total School Panel and the Super BI tool, which imports business management logic, treats the school as a "data factory." This logic, inspired by business models of productivity, generates a cascade of demands—from

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students to teachers and, finally, to school administrators—creating an environment of constant pressure (GEPUD; REPU, 2025).

What we see is the implementation of a " *just in time*" curriculum model, shaped on demand to serve the interests of the *Edtech* industry and its production chain. Curricular flexibility, one of the most criticized elements of the Secondary Education Reform, extends to all stages of education, as does the introduction of digital platforms and materials, generating deliberate instability in teaching work.

The introduction of digital platforms in state education, which is presented within the salvationist dimension of innovation, reveals itself as the materialization of dead labor—a finished product of previous productive processes that now acts as a "natural force" (Marx, 2013), concealing its historical and social genesis. Under the veil of technological fetishism, this mechanism simplifies, degrades, and subordinates living labor (teaching and learning), emptying pedagogical content and converting the teaching-learning relationship into the mere operationalization of ready-made packages.

State education is thus transformed into a commodity, remodeled by the far-right agenda under a dual logic: through privatization, marked by Tarcísio de Freitas' violent hammer blows on the stock exchange, which opened up even more space for corporate groups to profit; and through precariousness, intensifying the exploitation of teaching labor and symbolic violence against students, all under the pretext of modernization.

In this project, what is presented as technological innovation masks a reactionary reorganization of the school: precarious infrastructure, algorithmic control, and impoverished training consolidate a model that serves capital. The introduction of digital platforms is the symbol of an ideal of progress that materializes as the contemporary form of expropriation of public education, critical knowledge, and the future itself. As in Benjamin's (1987) reading of Paul Klee's work *Angelus Novus*[10] , we are faced with a scenario in which the angel of history contemplates an immense catastrophe: an incessant accumulation of destruction and ruins piling up at his feet, while he is pushed into the future by the strong and irresistible winds of progress.

[10] "There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. It depicts an angel who seems to want to move away from something he is staring at. His eyes are wide open, his mouth agape, his wings spread. The angel of history must have this appearance. His face is turned toward the past. Where we see a chain of events, he sees a single catastrophe, which accumulates ruin upon ruin and scatters it at our feet. He would like to pause to wake the dead and gather the fragments. But a storm blows from paradise and clings to his wings so tightly that he can no longer close them. This storm propels him irresistibly into the future, to which he turns his back, while the pile of ruins grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress" (Benjamin, 1987).

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