

The competent discourse as an ideological mechanism of domination and its implications for educational work in schools¹

O discurso competente como instrumento ideológico de dominação e seus impactos sobre trabalho educativo escolar

El discurso competente como instrumento ideológico de dominación y sus impactos sobre el trabajo educativo escolar

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Abstract: This study critically analyzes the concept of competent discourse and its implications for the autonomy of subjects and educational work within the context of disputes surrounding the school. The study investigates how this discourse, when institutionalized as authorized knowledge, transforms educational work into bureaucratization and technical and administrative rationality, thereby delegitimizing subjects within the school context. The theoretical-reflective analysis is based on a qualitative approach, linking the elements of competent discourse to forms of control present in the social context, and more specifically in the field of education. We develop an analysis and a theoretical essay, supported by classical authors of Brazilian pedagogical thought, allowing us to understand that competent discourse operates as an effective instrument of domination in the context of political disputes surrounding the school, nullifying the autonomy of subjects and dictating pragmatism in educational work.

Keywords: Competent discourse; School; Educational work; Autonomy.

Resumo: Este estudo analisa criticamente o conceito do discurso competente e suas implicações na autonomia dos sujeitos e no trabalho educativo no contexto de disputas em torno da escola. O estudo investiga como esse discurso, ao se tornar institucionalizado como saber autorizado, transforma o trabalho educativo em burocratização e racionalidade técnica e administrativa, deslegitimando os sujeitos do contexto escolar. A análise teórico-reflexiva parte de uma abordagem qualitativa, vinculando os elementos do discurso competente às formas de controle presentes no contexto social e mais especificamente no âmbito da educação. Construímos uma análise e um ensaio teórico, apoiada em autores clássicos do pensamento pedagógico brasileiro, nos permitindo compreender que o discurso competente incide como instrumento eficaz de dominação no contexto de disputa política em torno da escola, anulando a autonomia dos sujeitos, e ditando o pragmatismo no trabalho educativo.

Palavras-chave: Discurso competente; Escola; Trabalho educativo; Autonomia.

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Resumen: Este estudio analiza críticamente el concepto de discurso competente y sus implicaciones en la autonomía de los sujetos y en el trabajo educativo en el contexto de disputas en torno a la escuela. El estudio investiga cómo este discurso, al institucionalizarse como saber autorizado, transforma el trabajo educativo en burocratización y racionalidad técnica y administrativa, deslegitimando a los sujetos del contexto escolar. El análisis teórico-reflexivo parte de un enfoque cualitativo, vinculando los elementos del discurso competente con las formas de control presentes en el contexto social y, más específicamente, en el ámbito de la educación. Desarrollamos un análisis y un ensayo teórico, apoyados en autores clásicos del pensamiento pedagógico brasileño, lo que nos permite comprender que el discurso competente actúa como un instrumento eficaz de dominación en el contexto de la disputa política en torno a la escuela, anulando la autonomía de los sujetos y dictando el pragmatismo en el trabajo educativo.

Palabras clave: Discurso competente; Escuela; Trabajo educativo; Autonomía.

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Introduction

We start from the understanding that, in contemporary times, the logics of market organization and structuring have increasingly infiltrated school practices, through the bureaucratization of educational processes and technical rationality, making it essential to reflect on how the current political-educational context has conceived the understanding of autonomy and educational work. Although the school has historically been defended as a space for emancipation, it has become increasingly evident that the structures of instituted discourses — sustained by the logic of competencies — have suppressed and silenced subjects, transforming educational work into merely technical functions, based on the logic of normativity and management, in favor of efficiency, neutrality, and productivity.

In Brazil, especially over the last three decades, the implementation of policies and educational reforms oriented by economic and pragmatic interests has been reorganizing the functioning of educational institutions and their different levels of education, redefining pedagogical practices, management styles, and evaluation criteria to align with the hegemonic neoliberal project for education and society (Anes, 2021). In this process, educational work has been increasingly controlled and regulated by norms and political strategies aimed at standardization, efficiency, and low-cost productivity, using for this purpose projects focused on the rigidification of curricula and the recurrent implementation of assessment practices (Shiroma; Evangelista, 2003; Shiroma; Schneider, 2013). This compels us to question and understand more deeply the impacts this produces on school education and on the possibility of autonomy for the subjects involved, especially teachers.

Historically, as a fundamental part of the development of certain educational projects, teachers are directly affected by political reorientations directed at schools, based on guidelines favorable to training guided by the logic of competencies. It is no accident that most of the regulatory guidelines coming from international organizations since the 1990s highlighted the importance of readjusting the role of the teacher, as well as their training and work, in order to meet market interests and contribute to the development of dependent capitalist nations throughout Latin America (Oliveira, 2006). As a result, we have progressively witnessed an increasingly orchestrated and directed process that prevents teachers from exercising educational work based on the principle of intellectual, theoretical, and scientific autonomy, leading them to assume and correspond to the logic and discourse of competence (Magalhães, 2014).

Based on the reflections presented thus far, this article aims to critically analyze the concept of competent discourse and its implications for the autonomy of subjects and educational work within the context of disputes surrounding the school. The analysis we present in this article on the discourse of competence leads us to expose the transformations that have affected and transformed the educational field in general. But beyond that, it expresses relevance insofar as it may enable us to understand how discourses are constituted, legitimized, and come to affect educational work, producing direct effects on the autonomy of the subjects that make up the school space, as is the case of the teacher.

Our analysis follows a textual structure divided into three parts. The first presents and develops the foundations and ideological implications of the discourse of competence, based on the analyses developed especially by Chauí (2025) and Coelho (2011). Next, the second part seeks to understand how the discourse of competence reaches and impacts the autonomy of subjects and educational work. Finally, in the third part, we recover the meanings of training and educational work, supported by contributions from authors who develop counter-narratives, resisting the hegemonic order in force.

The discourse of competence: foundations and ideological implications

Chauí's (2025) critique of competent discourse represents a break with the logic of domination in contemporary societies. According to the author, this discourse is rooted in and sustained by the so-called knowledge society⁴, where knowledge ceases to

⁴ The term *Knowledge Society* is commonly associated with political and educational reforms, particularly those related to higher education. Its concept is polysemic and has come to be represented by several

be a support and occupies the place of the central motor of production and profit. More precisely, in the author's words: "the transformation of the human mind into a direct force of production" (Chauí, 2025, p. 119). This helps explain how knowledge controlled by corporations within the capitalist economy creates new forms of dependency and exclusion, placing it increasingly further from being democratized.

To understand the main foundations and ideological implications that structure what Chauí (2025) called competent discourse, it is necessary to understand what is meant by ideology, and what its effects are in the social context. To this end, we also draw on Chauí's theoretical contributions to provide a more coherent understanding of the issue.

The author (Chauí, 2025) develops her critical analysis based on dialectical materialist theory, according to which human history is not guided by divine wills or abstract ideas, but necessarily by the material conditions of life, where ideas arise from concrete practice, such as forms of production, property relations, and class struggles.

In this sense, when presenting her analysis of the historical development and meaning of ideology, the author indicates that, in bourgeois society, what we understand as ideology arises when the origin of society is no longer attributed to divine or external forces. This differs from previous social formations, since in these "there is not, in a strict sense, ideology, but mythology and theology" (Chauí, 2025, p. 121).

The author relies on a fundamental aspect of the Marxist conception to explain the emergence of ideologies. She argues that "Marx and Engels determine the moment of the emergence of ideologies at the instant when the social division of labor separates material or manual labor from intellectual labor" (Chauí, 2025, p. 61). In her understanding, it is possible to identify that the central highlight of the historical origin of ideology, from the Marxist conception, is intimately linked to the social division of labor. It thus reveals that ideology does not arise by chance, nor is it a natural characteristic of humanity from time immemorial.

This means that, in terms of historical and dialectical materialism, it is impossible to understand the origin and function of ideology without understanding class struggle, for ideology is one of the instruments of class domination and one of the forms of class struggle. Ideology is one of the means used by the dominant to exercise domination, making it not perceived as such by the dominated (Chauí, 2025, p. 83).

synonymous expressions, including "post-industrial society," "post-capitalist society," "third wave," "network society," "information society," and "knowledge economy," among others (Demari, 2008, p. 1).

This formulation allows us to advance in the understanding that ideology cannot be analyzed as an isolated fact. It needs to be understood within the dynamics of class struggle, for, according to the dialectical historical materialist conception, society is driven by conflicts between social classes that have opposing interests. It is, therefore, from the social division of labor that ideology creates conditions for one group to control not only material production but also the production of ideas. This is the path by which they seek to legitimize power in class society, reproducing the social division of labor, creating interpretations, justifications, and explanations that serve only their interests and the purpose of maintaining control over the established order of production. Ideology, therefore, functions as an important element used by the ruling class to conceal reality, naturalizing inequalities, but in a subtle way, as a strategy to reduce perception on the part of those subjected to control and exploitation. Ideology conceals the essence present in competent discourse, which is why it is so important to understand it to grasp the ideological meaning it carries.

This understanding becomes particularly relevant when we shift our gaze to the educational field. If ideology also operates in the realm of the production and legitimation of ideas, the school comes to occupy a strategic position in this process, for it is precisely within educational institutions that certain knowledges, discourses, and practices are recognized as legitimate, while others are silenced or disqualified. From this perspective, understanding the functioning of ideology is fundamental to analyzing how certain discourses come to guide the organization of educational work, defining what should be taught, how it should be taught, and who has the authority to determine such directions.

It is at this point that the notion of competent discourse, developed by Chauí (2025), gains centrality for the reflection proposed in this study. By establishing that only certain subjects possess legitimacy to speak and decide, this discourse creates hierarchies within social institutions, including the school. As a consequence, educational work tends to be progressively reorganized based on technical and administrative parameters that shift the teacher from the condition of a subject who thinks and produces knowledge to a more restricted position of executor of predefined guidelines.

Thus, understanding the ideological foundations that support competent discourse becomes essential in contemporary times. It contributes to analyzing how such mechanisms come to affect the organization of the school and the possibilities of autonomy in teaching work.

When presenting the conception of competent discourse, Chauí (2025) presents us with the representation of a specific form of modern ideology, where society remains divided into antagonistic classes. As the author describes:

[...] ideology of competence, which, like all ideology, conceals the social division of classes, but does so with the peculiarity of affirming that social division takes place between the competent (specialists who possess scientific and technological knowledge) and the incompetent (those who execute tasks commanded by specialists). The ideology of competence realizes domination through the enormous prestige and power of scientific-technological knowledge, that is, through the prestige and power of scientific and technological ideas (Chauí, 2025, p. 46).

Based on this formulation, it is possible to argue that the ideology that sustains competent discourse ensures that not just anyone has the right to say something to anyone else, anywhere, and in any circumstance. Competent discourse is that spoken by the specialist, who occupies a specific position or place in the organizational hierarchy, and there will be as many competent discourses as there are organizations and hierarchies in society.

The discourse of competence establishes a new perspective for defining class society, so that the ruling class and the working class are ideologically replaced by new divisions, represented by the "competent" and the "incompetent." This new definition allows us to understand that the class that dominates technical languages and specialized knowledge comes to have the socially legitimated right to speak, decide, command, and define what is true and valid. On the other hand, those who do not master these discourses are considered incompetent, devoid of legitimacy and power. This ideological mechanism reinforces social hierarchies, making the dominated passively accept their condition as incapable or incompetent, believing they lack the legitimate knowledge to question the established order.

This logic becomes particularly visible when we observe the functioning of school institutions. Within the school, competent discourse tends to manifest itself through the valorization of technical knowledge and pedagogical prescriptions developed by specialists external to the daily life of the classroom, which come to guide what should be taught, how it should be taught, and what results should be achieved. In this context, the teacher is often displaced from the position of a subject who interprets, selects, and produces pedagogical work, occupying a more restricted role as an executor of guidelines previously defined by administrative bodies (management systems, school boards, and coordinations), by curricular guidelines (directives and pedagogical political projects),

or by assessment processes (performance indicators, institutional and external evaluations). Such dynamics produce direct effects on teaching autonomy. By establishing that legitimate knowledge lies outside the concrete practice of educational work, the idea is reinforced that the teacher's role is merely to apply methodologies and meet goals set by others. The hierarchy between "competent" and "incompetent," described by Chauí (2025), also permeates the educational field, contributing to the delegitimation of pedagogical experience and to the weakening of the teacher as an intellectual and political subject of the educational process.

Chauí (1980), in her work "Culture and Democracy: Competent Discourse and Other Speeches," develops a central element for reflecting on how ideology and its mechanisms operate in society, legitimizing and delegitimizing subjects, validating and invalidating knowledges. The author denounces the way ideology transforms transformative knowledges —which she calls the *instituinte* (instituting) — into domesticated discourses — which she calls *instituído* (instituted). The *instituinte* corresponds to the force of the emergence of a knowledge that, when produced, questions the social order and comes to be seen as a threat, since its founding character of new ideas provokes resistance, repressing instituted power. However, the author signals how ideology appropriates this knowledge, domesticating it, incorporating and consuming "new ideas, provided they have lost the ties with the originating time of their institution and thus remain outside of time" (Chauí, 1980, p. 6).

It is observed that, through ideology, the ruling classes appropriate *instituinte* knowledge after it has lost its critical potency, that is, when it loses its connection with its originating time, becoming neutralized and converted into *instituído*, knowledge that is accepted and integrated into the dominant logic. Thus, knowledges that were once emancipatory come to serve as tools of domination, justified under the appearance of legitimate discourses. The power of ideology lies in transforming knowledges that produce consciousness into competent discourse, to validate and indicate how, where, and who are the subjects legitimized to handle or discuss them.

This movement of knowledge neutralization can also be observed in the contemporary educational field, especially with the advance of neoliberal political and regulatory measures. In the school context, knowledges and reflections that emerge as questioning of established practices or hegemonic forms of teaching organization often tend to be progressively incorporated by institutional structures in a way that empties them of their critical potency. Ideas that initially arise as problematizations of the curriculum, pedagogical practices, or even the very purposes of education end up being

reappropriated by educational policies, normative documents, or official pedagogical discourses, becoming technical or methodological guidelines devoid of their challenging character. In this process, what could provoke shifts in the way of understanding educational work becomes integrated into the institutional logic as just another procedure to be applied, contributing to the maintenance of the existing order. Thus, educational practice runs the risk of transforming originally critical knowledges into instruments of adaptation to already established structures, reinforcing, albeit subtly, the mechanisms of regulation and control that permeate school life.

Chauí (2025) formulates another important point for reflecting on how ideology is constituted and gains strength in the social and political-educational context. She analyzes how ideology is transformed with the advance of bureaucratization and the belief in technical rationality, turning bureaucratization into a central phenomenon of a homogeneous social order, which creates an illusion of rationality, efficiency, and neutrality. This analysis starts from the historical context from the 1930s onward, where ideological discourse created a new format with the advent of Fordism and the rational organization of work, which came to be based on technical and scientific principles of productivity and efficiency.

Bureaucracy came to constitute a predominant organizational model from the aforementioned historical context, structuring itself in social relations and based on technical and administrative rules, where power depends not exclusively on the authority of a legitimated subject but on the very functioning of the organization. Authority becomes that of the structure and no longer of the subjects.

With Fordism, a new practice of social relations is adopted, known as organization. [...] To organize is to administer, and to administer is to introduce rationality into social relations (in industry, commerce, school, hospital, the State, etc.). Administrative rationality consists of arguing that it is not necessary to discuss the ends of an action or a practice, but rather to establish effective means for achieving a certain objective. [...] In the case of industrial work, the organization introduces two novelties. The first, which we have already mentioned, is the assembly line, that is, the assertion that it is more rational and more effective for each worker to have a very specialized function and not have to perform all the tasks to produce a complete object. The second is so-called scientific management, that is, after stripping the worker of knowledge of the complete production of an object, the organization divides and separates those who possess such knowledge — the managers and administrators—from those who execute the fragmented tasks — the workers. With this, the social division of labor is achieved through the separation between those who are competent

to direct and the incompetent, who only know how to execute (Chauí, 2025, p. 106-108, author's emphasis).

Technical rationality, structuring the organization of work — here represented by industrial work — creates an environment where whoever holds knowledge, whether technical, scientific, or organizational, holds power. The separation between knowing and doing causes workers to lose their autonomy, becoming objects of manipulation of this organizational system, accentuating social inequality and concealing power relations. We can thus say that the organization constitutes the body and technical rationality the face of competent discourse (Chauí, 2025).

In the logic of production and organization of neoliberal work, competent discourse functions as a tool of domination that transforms the logic of competition into a natural law of life, causing the individual, far from understanding the essence of reality which is concealed by ideological discourses favorable to the valorization of a competent society, to take responsibility for and blame themselves for their own failure, sustaining bureaucracy and technical rationality as the only possible truths.

The school as a territory of institutionalized competence

Having understood the foundations and ideological implications of competent discourse, we will now direct our focus more precisely to the school institution, in order to analyze how such discourse affects educational work and teacher autonomy in contemporary times. This requires, necessarily, exposing the way education has assumed forms and structures that distance it from its human meaning.

Supported by Saviani (2015), we recognize the school and the education it produces as results of human work, arising from humans' own action upon nature. This allows us to recognize educational work as "[...] the act of producing, directly and intentionally, in each singular individual, the humanity that is produced historically and collectively by the ensemble of humans" (Saviani, 2015, p. 287).

Education has in its genesis an ontological character, allowing that, through the apprehension of ideas, values, knowledges, languages, and symbols, the subject constitutes their second nature as a social subject (Lukács, 1978). Reducing the objective of the school solely to the act of teaching reading and writing, according to Saviani (2015), distances it from its essence, from its capacity to actively participate in the process of subject humanization. The very existence of the school can be understood as

an expression of the specificity of education, so that its own identity confirms its human and social character.

Another important point emphasized by Saviani (2015), when exposing the human and ontological meaning proper to education and schooling, is that we are referring to an educational space and context

[...] whose role consists of the socialization of systematized knowledge. [...] It is not, therefore, just any type of knowledge. Thus, the school concerns elaborated knowledge and not spontaneous knowledge; systematized knowledge and not fragmented knowledge; erudite culture and not popular culture (Saviani, 2015, p. 288).

However, considering the school as a historical and social institution, inserted in class society, it necessarily also needs to be understood as an educational context permeated by contradictions and disputes between training projects. It is no accident that, historically, it occupies centrality in political debates and pedagogical reflections, between conceptions, theories, and projects that defend and sustain different perspectives of education and society, necessarily articulated with class interests.

Coelho (2011), when analyzing education inserted in the social division of classes, argues that the conflicts and contradictions present in the school and in educational work are not accidental or representations of fateful events. Rather, they are dispute movements that compose the very model of production that hegemonically guides contemporary sociability, and "as well as ideology, are present in all aspects and dimensions of education and the school" (Coelho, 2011, p. 317).

Thus, competent discourse operates as a highly effective tool, contributing to the normalization and curricular organization, in addition to hierarchizing the contents and knowledges that should be worked on in school. Within this logic, methodologies aligned with technical rationality tend to be privileged, and when it comes to school structure and management, they become oriented by parameters of efficiency and productivity.

The National Common Curricular Base (BNCC), as a curricular policy, can be analyzed as part of a movement of curricular centralization, whose articulation with the logic of competencies has been problematized and interpreted as an example of the incidence of competent discourse on educational work. By defining what should be taught and learned on a national scale and instituting general and specific competencies to be achieved at each stage of schooling, it materializes competent discourse. Although presented as a guiding curricular policy, it sustains the defense of practices, contents, and forms of evaluation based on technical and instrumental rationality (Lopes, 2019).

This process produces direct implications for teaching autonomy and for the way educational work comes to be conceived in the institutional context. By establishing a predefined set of competencies, skills, and contents to be achieved at each stage of schooling, curricular organization tends to guide the teacher's work based on technical parameters that delimit, with increasing precision, what to teach, when to teach, and what results should be achieved. In this logic, the space for pedagogical interpretation, for creation, and for critical mediation of knowledge tends to narrow, since teaching work becomes constantly regulated by normative documents, standardized assessments, and performance goals.

The centrality attributed to technical rationality contributes to displacing the teacher from their condition as a subject who thinks and organizes the educational process to a position closer to that of an executor of previously established guidelines, reinforcing the idea that the effectiveness of pedagogical work depends above all on the correct application of procedures defined by instances external to the concrete practice of the classroom.

On this, Coelho (2011, p. 322) warns us that: "To the extent that education is seen as a technical and neutral action, the interests of the ruling class are imposed and perpetuated under the appearance of rationality and the illusion of neutrality." The author also points out that reality ends up being distorted or even concealed, causing the root of social division and the origin of classes to remain unknown and "nor is the mode of production seen as responsible for the position of individuals in society" (Coelho, 2011, p. 320).

In this perspective, educational work may present limits regarding its emancipatory dimension, insofar as it is crossed by ideological determinations that neutralize its political dimension and strain its formative potentiality. This scenario evidences the need for critical analysis of these discourses, as signaled by Chauí (2025). The notion of neutrality, in this context, can operate as a mechanism for concealing power relations, contributing to the conformation of practices with little autonomy.

Training and autonomy: between the instituted and the instituting

As exposed above, we perceive that the school becomes a territory of institutionalized competence. This understanding reveals that we are experiencing a scenario where bureaucratization and technical rationality capture educational work. Thus, speaking of training and autonomy implies challenging consolidated discourses — instituted from competent discourse — with the intention of recovering meanings.

Based on this understanding, we conduct our analyses by proposing to reflect on the (im)possibilities of autonomy in educational work, questioning training between what is instituted — the bureaucratization of organization and technical and administrative rationality — and what can emerge as instituting — narratives, critical thoughts, and practices of resistance. In summary, we ask: is there autonomy in educational work, or is it just a myth sustained by competent discourse?

When we look at the figure of the teacher in the contemporary school context, we note that they have been performing the task of applying techniques, norms, and rules prescribed from pre-established contents, seeking to achieve certain competencies. Educational work is stripped of its social condition, losing its connection with praxis and creation. There occurs, therefore, a domestication of teaching work. This confirms Chauí's (2025) thinking when she warns us that competent discourse selects knowledges, converting them into legitimate discourses, but not uttered by just anyone, rather by the competent, specialists.

This educational scenario in which the teacher, through educational work, is reduced to a technical executor, devoid of power, legitimacy, and political voice, leads us to understand what Cruz (2012), when addressing the idea of the "domestication of difference," critically exposes about the way educational policies deal with social and cultural differences — not aligned with the project of social transformation, but as something to be included within the acceptable molds of the existing order. The author, denouncing a historical and ideological process in which the collective action of subjects is demobilized and replaced by an apparently democratic discourse, reveals that this concerns the "death of the political subject." With depoliticization, subjects cease to be recognized as collectives that fight for social transformation, to be treated as individual social actors, consumers of affirmative public policies — aimed at specific needs. As the author explains:

With the "forgetting of politics" or "murder of the political subject," actions and debates that dispute the social and political meaning of "exclusion" have elaborated a notion of citizenship, as a method of inclusion and democratic management, without establishing clear analytical distinctions between the public space and private interests that allow for a critical understanding of exclusion and the proper evaluation of its dynamics as inherent to capitalism. In the current context, especially in educational discourse, the set of these indistinctions and notions does not allow us to concretely link deregulation policies to the impoverishment of the political field, previously promised by the expansion of popular participation, or even that the deepening of exclusions has to do with this logic (Cruz, 2011, p. 175).

Thus, we can understand that the figures of the teacher and the student are dissolved into mere social actors, stripping them of the capacity to dispute and transform. Contradictions cease to be understood as class conflict, where affirmative action policies address the effects and not the causes of inequalities.

Coelho (2011), when addressing the pragmatism present in the training of educators and students, reveals that:

Educational institutions have become very pragmatic, aiming for immediate results, concerned with teaching how to become a good teacher, what to do, and how to act in each situation. Knowledge is often transmitted to students as finished truth, to be accepted as if it were unquestionable and linked to how to do something in education, in school, generating the illusion of efficacy (Coelho, 2011, p. 315).

Educational work, when captured by competent discourse, deviates from its social purpose. Subjected to a logic of bureaucratic organization, it ends up reducing its function to the operationalization of technical and administrative rationality, subordinating itself to a logic that weakens it and nullifies the autonomy of both the teacher and the students. A process that contributes to the suppression of subjects.

Given this scenario, it becomes inevitable to return to the question that guides this study: does autonomy in educational work actually exist, or is it configured only as a myth sustained by competent discourse itself?

If, on the one hand, contemporary educational discourse insists on affirming the importance of teaching autonomy and the critical training of subjects, on the other hand, the concrete conditions of school organization seem to point in the opposite direction, since pedagogical work becomes increasingly regulated by norms, technical parameters, and institutional control devices. Autonomy tends to be proclaimed at the discursive level but restricted in the daily practice of educational work. This contradiction shows that autonomy, as often presented in educational policies and discourses, may assume a more rhetorical than actually real character, functioning as a promise that conceals the structural limits imposed by technical rationality and the bureaucratization that permeate the contemporary school context.

Consequently, it is necessary to reflect on the current scenario in which educational work finds itself, which indicates the possibility of challenging this logic imposed by competent discourse, with the aim of seeking elements for an emancipatory education. What lies before us is an ethical and political challenge of educational work,

which requires resisting bureaucratization and the technical and administrative rationality of control, affirming education as an autonomous, critical, and creative practice.

Given all this social structure imposed by the logic of neoliberalism, the force of the instituted — constituted from competent discourse — the practices of bureaucratization, technical rationality, and the erasure of subjectivities, there also emerge experiences and narratives that affirm the instituting, the subjects who struggle and resist as a form of resistance, reviving forgotten, camouflaged, or erased memory. Such subjects still resist, producing knowledge from other ways of narrating the world.

To understand the described scenario more clearly, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by neoliberalism in the context of contemporary social transformations. We highlight that in neoliberal rationality — marked by principles of efficiency, competitiveness, and individual responsibility — competent discourse finds conditions for strengthening, by legitimizing technical knowledge and control devices over educational work. In this logic, market dynamics come to be taken as a reference for the organization of different spheres of social life, shifting onto individuals the responsibility for their success or failure and naturalizing structural inequalities.

The social structure points precisely to this set of relations, institutions, and discourses that organize collective life and guide social practices, including the school and educational work. Thus, with neoliberal rationality, educational institutions become permeated by management, evaluation, and control mechanisms that privilege measurable results, administrative efficiency, and standardization of practices. It is in this context that competent discourse gains strength, as it legitimizes the authority of specialists, technical knowledges, and bureaucratic structures that come to define the direction of education. In this way, the school ceases to be merely a space for human formation and also begins to function as part of this broader social structure, reproducing, albeit often subtly, the values, hierarchies, and modes of organization that characterize neoliberal rationality.

Adichie's (2019) critique of the 'single story' allows us to understand how the legitimacy of certain narratives is associated with power relations, an aspect that articulates with competent discourse when defining which knowledges can circulate as truth. The author reports that contact with stories that did not represent her reality led her to believe, for a long time, that legitimate stories were those that did not represent people like her, African, Black, and a woman. Based on her life experience, the author offers a critique, revealing that the power to tell stories, as well as to silence other stories, is not a neutral or unconscious act; quite the opposite, it is totally related to

structures of domination. According to her, the emergence of a single story is entirely linked to power relations: "Power is the ability not only to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person" (Adichie, 2019, p. 12). This explains how competent discourse acts, penetrating the social structure, branching into politics, economics, and culture, thus allowing certain groups to tell the stories of others, defining them as absolute and legitimate truth.

Krenak (2020), in his work "Ideas to Postpone the End of the World," likewise critiques how humanity was constructed from a colonial and Eurocentric logic, serving the interests of the ruling class, which in turn disregards reciprocity with the Earth and all beings. Krenak's (2020) critique of the dominant civilizing project helps to show how certain rationalities impose themselves as universal, which dialogues with competent discourse by legitimizing specific forms of knowledge and silencing others.

The articulation of the above reflections with the central argument that has been discussed thus far allows us to understand that both Adichie (2019) and Krenak (2020) contribute to unveiling the mechanisms through which competent discourse establishes and maintains itself as a legitimate form of interpreting reality. By denouncing the danger of the single story, Adichie (2019) shows how certain groups hold the power to define which narratives are considered valid, silencing other experiences, knowledges, and modes of existence. This dynamic directly dialogues with the logic of competent discourse, as it reveals that the legitimacy of speech is not distributed equally among subjects but constructed from power relations, determining who can speak, what can be said, and which knowledges are recognized as true.

Similarly, Krenak (2020) broadens this critique by showing that the dominant civilizing project, sustained by a Eurocentric and capitalist rationality, instituted a single way of understanding the world, marginalizing other knowledges, especially those linked to Indigenous cosmologies and other forms of relationship with nature and collectivity. Thus, by bringing these perspectives into the debate, the text shows that resisting competent discourse also implies recognizing the plurality of narratives, knowledges, and experiences that have historically been silenced, opening space for other ways of thinking, teaching, and producing knowledge in society, and especially in the school itself.

Given the above, reflecting on training and autonomy, relating the place of the instituted and the instituting, is to recognize that educational work is immersed in this colonizing project of submission to institutionalized discourses and technical rationality. Although structures and competent discourse operate to silence, erase, standardize, and

control, the possibility of constructing counter-narratives, possibilities of resistance to the existing order, opens up.

Conclusion

The analyses carried out on competent discourse, especially considering the reflections produced by Chauí (2025) on this idea, reveal the ways in which autonomy and educational work are affected by ideologies and by neoliberal logic, which neutralize and disguise projects for the control of education. In school, this discourse materializes in structures that limit speech, thought, action, and interaction between teachers and students. Such reflections on the contemporary school context announce how autonomy and educational work are neglected. And this occurs not by a direct act of censorship, but by a subtle form of delegitimation.

The authors with whom we have been dialoguing highlight the need for critical analysis, making us understand that the struggle to dismantle competent discourse is not only a struggle for autonomy, or for better conditions of educational work — regarding the school — but rather an epistemological and political struggle. It is the refusal of authorized discourse — uttered by certain so-called competent subjects, specialists. It is thinking beyond what has been validated and permitted. It is thinking in counter-narratives, as resistance in order to move the imposed structures.

Returning to the central question that guided this study: Does autonomy exist in educational work, or does it constitute a myth produced by competent discourse? The reflections developed thus far indicate that teaching autonomy, within contemporary school structures, is deeply strained. This occurs because the forms of organization of educational work, permeated by technical rationality, bureaucratization, and the authority of specialized knowledges, produce conditions that limit the possibility of creation, critical reflection, and pedagogical decision-making on the part of teachers. Thus, autonomy tends to be institutionally presented as a guaranteed principle, but in practice it manifests itself in a restricted manner, often conditioned by norms, prescribed curricula, and evaluation mechanisms that delimit the field of teaching action. In this sense, the reflections proposed here show that autonomy cannot be understood as a given already assured by the school structure, but as a permanently disputed construction within the power relations that permeate education. It is precisely in this space of tension that the possibility of resistance and reinvention of educational practice emerges, indicating that, although often turned into a myth by competent discourse, autonomy

can be reconfigured through the critical and collective action of the subjects that make up the school space.

Through her critiques of competent discourse, Chauí (1980; 2025) calls on us to challenge it from within, to dismantle it through alternative forms of discourse, and to reject what has been institutionally authorized and legitimized. This requires engaging in counter-hegemonic action against established power structures, assuming our role as political subjects within the context of class struggle. To this end, it is essential to foster research and scholarship that critically engage with the debate on the ideological mechanisms that permeate contemporary educational work.

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