

## FUTURITY AND RE-TIMING CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION: FROM BRAZIL'S EDUCATIONAL REFORM TO THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA\*

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*ABSTRACT:* This article examines the connection between education and futurity in the contemporary society. What implications do the changes in our sense of future — increasingly marked by risk and security ideas — have on modernity's project of progress, the driving force behind modern education? Although the educational institution structure does not seem to have changed drastically, pedagogic practices have become infused with a new set of meanings. As knowledge becomes ever more contingent upon calculations *of* the future, a new rationale comes into place, justifying pedagogical changes, surveillance systems in schools, and national reforms, such as the reform of the secondary school held in Brazil, in 2017. This also creates the demand for a re-timing of school activities, as well as new educational promises for neoliberal international agendas.

*Keywords:* Futurity. History of education. Neoliberalism. Education reform. Risk.

### FUTURIDADE E NOVAS TEMPORALIZAÇÕES DA EDUCAÇÃO CONTEMPORÂNEA: DA REFORMA BRASILEIRA DO ENSINO MÉDIO À AGENDA INTERNACIONAL

*RESUMO:* Este artigo analisa a relação entre educação e o futuridade na sociedade contemporânea. Quais implicações as mudanças em nosso senso de futuro — cada vez mais marcada pelas ideias de risco e segurança — têm no projeto de progresso da modernidade, a força motriz por trás da educação moderna? Embora a estrutura das instituições de ensino não pareça ter mudado drasticamente, as práticas pedagógicas incorporam cada vez mais novos sentidos e significados. À medida que o conhecimento se torna cada vez mais dependente dos cálculos do futuro, uma nova lógica entra em vigor, justificando mudanças pedagógicas, sistemas de vigilância nas escolas e reformas educacionais, como a reforma do ensino secundário

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realizada no Brasil, em 2017. Isso também exige reajustes nas atividades e nas rotinas escolares, bem como a formulação de novas promessas educacionais segundo as agendas internacionais neoliberais.

*Palavras-chave:* Futuridade. História da educação. Neoliberalismo. Reforma educacional. Risco.

### **FUTURIDAD Y NUEVAS TEMPORALIZACIONES DE LA EDUCACIÓN CONTEMPORÁNEA: DESDE LA REFORMA BRASILEÑA DE LA ENSEÑANZA SECUNDARIA A LA AGENDA INTERNACIONAL**

*RESUMEN:* Este artículo examina la relación entre educación y la futuridad en la sociedad contemporánea. ¿Cuáles son las implicaciones envueltas en las alteraciones de nuestra experiencia de futuro, cada vez más sustentada por las ideas de riesgo y seguridad, en el progreso de la juventud, para los antiguos proyectos de emancipación que sostenían la educación moderna? Aunque la estructura de las instituciones de enseñanza no parezca haber cambiado drásticamente, las prácticas pedagógicas son incorporadas más con nuevos sentidos y significados. A la medida del conocimiento depende cada vez más de los cálculos del futuro, se implementa una nueva justificación para los cambios pedagógicos, los sistemas de vigilancia en las escuelas y las reformas nacionales, como la reforma del Ensino Médio en Brasil, en 2017. Eso también crea la demanda de un nuevo calendario de las actividades escolares, así como nuevas promesas educativas para las agendas internacionales neoliberales.

*Palabras clave:* Futuridad. Historia de la educación. Neoliberalismo. Reforma educativa. Riesgo.

## Futurity and education: a fundamental link

*It is the freedom you have always wanted in order to decide your own future.*  
(Brazilian government TV advertisement for the 2017 high school reform)

*Children should be educated, not with reference to their present condition, but rather with regard to a possibly improved future state of the human race, that is, according to the idea of humanity and its entire destiny.*

(Kant, *Kant on Education*, 1900)

**T**he main slogan for the Brazilian secondary school educational reform, enacted by President Michel Temer in 2017, was: “It is the freedom you have always wanted in order to decide your own future”.<sup>1</sup> By changing the curriculum structure, such as transforming traditionally

compulsory disciplines into possible itineraries, the reform was marketed as a promise to free students from the bonds of traditional education, i.e. making “learning much more stimulating” and building a “real bridge for the future”.<sup>2</sup> Supporters of Temer’s reform argued that “the traditional curriculum was overly academic”, “entirely disconnected from the reality of the labor market”, and largely “unattractive to young students”.<sup>3</sup> In a reform campaign video broadcast, a young black actress, interpreting a ‘typical’ Brazilian high school student, explained the changes for the audience: “now, our new high school will work according to my dreams and to what I want for my future”.<sup>4</sup> According to the Minister of Education, it was a matter of ‘progress’. “Children and young people in Brazil are in a hurry. Education needs to move forward”.<sup>5</sup>

As can be understood from these initial sentences, the marketing campaign for the educational reform program revolved around the notion that the Brazilian public education must ‘move ahead’ into the future and become ‘attractive’, ‘as it is in other countries’.<sup>6</sup> It also develops a certain imagery of young people’s lives, especially with regard to their future. On one hand, they are apparently evoking the traditional link between education and progress, which has been repeated since Brazil’s colonial period by spokespersons from a variety of ideological or party affiliations. On the other hand, educational reform propaganda engenders these recurrent terms in a typical contemporary globalized narrative, reinforcing the shift that gradually displaces the traditional association between education and futurity. They are images of ongoing changes, expectations, aspirations, anxieties, and dreams that are, today, being expressed, engendered or even invented by narratives on education. Images that are not circumscribed to the Brazilian reality, but travel across continents, through national and international agendas, media assessment and specialist narratives, reinforcing the current role that education has in the production of our ways of feeling, thinking, and planning the future.

As it is well known, the close connection between education and ideas on what is to come is not new. Since at least the advent of modernity, they have been engaged in intense dialogue, connected by a sort of historical link. If education has been an important figure in debates on the future, pedagogical projects have also played a crucial role in the constitution of our futurity sense. In Brazilian history, this link between education and images of the future has been repeatedly evoked, emerging — since the genesis of the Brazilian nation — both as a key to conservative reform and as a banner for emancipatory narratives. For instance, it is not surprising that, in 1889, José Ricardo Pires de Almeida (2000) connected education to progress, while defending the prohibition of votes by the illiterate — which at that time meant 80% of the population. His book — the first on the History of Education in Brazil — was a propaganda piece for the empire regime and clearly revealed not only how the ‘progress of reason’ was used in attempts to maintain mon-

archy, but also how education had become a fundamental cog in disputes for social hegemony regarding the future. Education, however, also appeared as 'the mother of future progress' in discourses against the Empire, as in those given by the Brazilian abolitionist Tavares Bastos, who strongly defended instruction as the only path towards emancipation (1976, p. 254).

Despite their ideological differences, both narratives worked as complementary components of the modern progress ideal (and of what it meant in terms of time and history experience). Actually, they were both echoes of the enormous temporal displacement that had been experienced in Europe at least a century earlier.<sup>7</sup> Whether singing the praises of progress or reacting to it, both perspectives look to the unknown character of the future, a quality that thereby allows for, or perhaps instigates, new struggles for control. Koselleck (2002; 2004) argues that new temporal experiences were configured, especially since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which is a process that turned time into an absolute agent of change. The horizon of expectations became productive technology, mobilizing the entire social process and every subject on the globe in this direction. The enormous challenge of modernity — to achieve or arrive at the modernity itself — was thus defined as a goal, temporalizing not only concepts and history, but also the idea of education and its institutionalization. Modern education became a fundamental element of the 'new man' image — a necessary device for building a different and better world, fulfilling the 'destiny' of humanity, as Kant claimed in his lectures on Pedagogy, in a citation that served as the epigraph for this text (KANT, 1803).

Today, nevertheless, the image of future is not exactly the same as that which 'inebriated' modern thinkers (according to Frank E. Manuel 1962). After the Second World War and, more recently, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the idea of future seems to be taking its distance from modern *futurologies*.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to the modern idea of progress, the image of future, nowadays, seems less an open resource and more a limited dimension that we are deeply interested in predicting (and also, most of the time, avoiding). It is a 'globalized feeling' that came from a sense of futurity, which, placed alongside our present commentary on the future, makes us very much aware of the changes we have been currently experiencing.

By 'futurity', we mean a set of thoughts, images, feelings, hopes, and fears that come about as we imagine who we may become. It emerges on the surface of language, as well as within political decisions; it justifies government investments just as it makes it possible to raise new social issues. It is present in the way people make their personal plans as well as in the subjects that become popular in literature; it marks the way old people buy insurance as well as the frequency with which young people drop out of school. It is a sense that runs across the lives of individuals, as well as that of the social body, in multiple dimensions. It is a kind of imagination affecting the reality

of the present; it sustains certain forms of knowledge, to the same extent as it is supported by them. It is an effect of a certain actuality in the same measure that configures its limits and powers. Finally, it is part of our experience of the present. Moreover, as with any experience, it has historical frames.

The contemporary sense of futurity, taken in this perspective, is a complex sense, developed by multiple agents, but marked, however, by a strong risk protagonism (BECK, 1999). Security, in turn, is considered an imperative at all contemporary societal levels — global, national, institutional, and personal. It is a duty that is neither restricted to the state nor to some specific institutions. In fact, responsibility for security becomes an increasingly individualized process, a cultural and historical phenomenon that has widespread impact on many spheres of our lives, including education. Actually, contemporary education narratives play a crucial role in the current configuration of our sense of future. They are not only effects of the changes in our time experience, but also instruments of its intensification, being globalization agents of this risk discursiveness, both in local realities (as in Brazilian educational reforms) and on the world landscape. They are discourses that often call for an education ‘re-timing’, requesting faster dynamics and new skills, producing new demands that individuals must live up to, creating expectations, fears, and certain dreams. Using ‘modern terms’, such as progress, freedom, and vocation, neoliberal discourses engage them, however, within another assemblage, awarding them contemporary meanings. It is no coincidence that Temer’s program of reforms associated ‘freedom’ with the image of a bridge to the future. His reform is justified by the idea that the future is already accessible, and it is ‘just up to you’ to find a way to ‘get there’.

## Fitness not “Sitness”: when the historical time machine jams

*Reimagine the classroom.  
How do students with different styles learn best?  
Not by sitting in a two-hour lecture.  
Advertising image.*

(Roseman University of Health Sciences,  
Nevada, USA)

Education plays a complex and ambiguous role in the present time: while remaining an echo of the modern progress project, it is also the image of its decline. Currently, contemporary education — its institutions, knowledge, and discourse — is a privileged *locus* of overlapping images of time (and senses of future); images of what we one day desired but now no longer imagine as a ‘destiny’. It is still a disciplinary time machine, but one in crisis: ever more trapped within temporal incompatibilities, among other things. While most

educational institutions do not seem to have changed drastically, the comprehension and discourses that surround their practices have apparently received new or different values. In fact, *changes in our temporal experience are producing not only internal 'discomfort' in schools and universities, but also changing the meanings and beliefs that underlie pedagogical programs, projects, and discourses.*

Thus, if education is still operating in disciplinary 'formats', the temporality presumed by the operation of the device, however, is commonly thought of and judged as 'inadequate' for contemporary bodies and subjectivities demands (SIBILIA, 2012). The time we spend in the classroom, the slow processes required for reading and writing, the linearity of content, and the very principle of discipline are increasingly being challenged. On a daily basis, within pedagogical spaces, we detect some kind of 'incompatibility' between the accelerated temporality in which we are immersed outside of school and the schedules and pedagogical grids on which schools continue to be based. It is a time incompatibility that, increasingly, has been reflected in discourses requiring a 'temporal reprogramming' of education, a re-timing of school. It is a concern not only related to the time children spend at school, but also to how that temporality is experienced: often tedious, without meaning, and boring.

Actually, more than a mere concern, making school time more fun has become a real demand, a goal pursued by many teachers, and very much interpreted as a need, among other necessary changes, 're-timing pedagogical structures'.<sup>9</sup> In the Charles Pinckney Elementary School (Mount Pleasant, SC, USA), for instance, the classical image of school-aged kids confined for long hours in a day was altered by "unlocking children from their chairs". Instead of traditional school furniture, some of their classrooms are equipped with desks that double as exercise equipment.<sup>10</sup> They also have the "Brain Activity Room" learning lab, where classes, 'instruction', and 'academic tasks' can be carried out while moving through different exercise stations. When facing the television monitors teachers use as visual aids, pupils can go from exercise bikes and stair steppers to a mini-basketball hoop with no worries: at each station, they find math flashcards or spelling challenges. As one of the students explains, "I think they are cool, because we can pedal while we are writing and stuff".<sup>11</sup> According to the teacher who coordinates the project, "the idea was simple: the students could exercise while teachers taught".<sup>12</sup> If the 'educational incarceration' model is broken, he explains, the key to fixing it lies in applying basic kinesthetic principles, incorporating sporting standards into their regular classroom activities: "we want to show that more movement equals better grades, better behavior, better bodies." For Spurlock, the Pinckney Elementary experience is a "vision of the future classroom", "not just in Charleston, but across the country". "Fitness not 'sitness'" and "exercise grows brain cells" are, actually, slogans that are not only on the walls of Pinckney School, but are also slogans of the American movement, "Let's move! Active schools", a Mi-

chelle Obama initiative run by several NGOs and corporations. In their view: “physical activity increases blood flow, which brings more oxygen, water, and glucose to the brain, leading to improved concentration. As a result, ‘Active kids learn better’”.<sup>13</sup> More importantly, notes Lara Latto, principal of another school engaged in the movement, “kids do not realize the health and mental benefits, they just think it is fun”.<sup>14</sup>

Regardless of whether, in fact, this type of project introduces an improvement in children’s performance or a decrease in their disinterest, for us, understanding how contemporary educational narratives reverberate a crisis in institutional dynamics that also can be understood in terms of the temporalities is more important. In this perspective, the requirement for re-timing school is part of an attempt to turn disciplinary structures and the “heavy temporality” they have implied into more dynamic approaches, new rhythms, and speedy forms, such as that shown by the “Brain Activity Room” or proposed by the “unlocking school time” project. They seem to be some sort of ‘replacement’ of the closed system, a ‘contortion’ of the discipline temporal frame. Yet, as we will see, it is not merely a matter of turning slow into high speed, or of transforming ‘sitting still’ through the ‘permanent fitness movement’; it is much more in that it refers to a broad change in the assumptions that underpin education.

It is noteworthy that the traditional temporality engendered in the school life as we know it — divided by age and grades, built within a confined space, put together as a list of sequential, fragmented syllabi and carried out through a generalized chronometry — was no historical accident. Rather, it was intrinsically associated with modern governance types and the rationality they imply, and continues to sustain a deep connection to the constitution of modern temporality itself (especially, to its project of the future). Time was never a mere addendum to the modern power that sets itself up through a discrete, yet calculated and permanent, economy. The process by which a very detailed analytical pedagogy is developed also supposes this segmentation of time is organized into a serialization that links the ‘genesis’ of civilized individuals to the evolution of societies. As such, the modern school emergence meant the advent of a certain fixing of practices, values, and agencies tied to a unique and specific regime of temporality — which created an inextricable link between the temporal regulation of the present and the progress expectations. School was one of those specific hinges, a point of transfer between these components, in which progressive history was transformed into individual life (also progressive). A place and a time when (and where) the macro became micro and — again — micro-temporality became the history of progress.

Although it may have caused discomfort (and it very likely did), the disciplinarization of time seemed to be the price institutions should pay, at least in theory, for offering the discipline and strength people would need to

build a civilizing project writ in terms of a ‘better’ tomorrow. Reading and writing, for instance, were fundamental tools in building the very concept of the nation state; first, this meant long hours of handwriting classes, then exercises in reading aloud to the class and, during the learning process, systematic exercises in interpreting texts and memorizing content. For such ‘dietetics’, a linear and progressive development was expected, solitary and introspective conduct was required, and concentration was needed (SIBILIA, 2012).

Today, however, the slow, linear, progressive, isolated, chronometric temporality and the very ‘experience’ of confinement provoke, among other things, a profound malaise, especially in students, although not exclusively so. On one hand, it is a discomfort reminding us that disciplined education has subjected both teachers and children to a generalized chronometry, oppressing bodies and minds within the gears of a machine that rarely, if ever, considers them as individual beings. On the other hand, it is not merely a signal of resistance and emancipation. More than a simple inadequacy, this incompatibility may also reflect a change in governance regimes. Engendered through the call for more dynamism, speed, flexibility, and agility, movement itself becomes a claim for the adaptation of bodies and subjectivity to other machinery, to other modes of power functioning. From this perspective, the discourse against discipline is not exclusively a claim for a free, autonomous, and democratic school, but a key argument for the current forces of neoliberal power, an important stake for the market. The training that takes place today incorporates new forms of submission, as incentives for activity, or rather, hyperactivity.<sup>15</sup> Being obedient and useful for current domination mechanisms means to surrender to logics that promote more movement than fixation, more dispersion than concentration, more transit than distribution, more sensation than perception, and more action than reflection. In other words, the requirement of activity at school does not seem to simply represent a loosening of discipline in order to free docile bodies. It is an effort to reframe school time within our current normativity of activeness, to place it within another regime, one that gradually undermines distinctions between activity and rest, private and professional time, and work and consumption (CRARY, 2013, p. 15). In this paradigm, reflection and introspection, silence and learning, concentration and rest — dualities that were once bases for school pedagogy — are being replaced by other pairs, such as fitness and performance, and learning and action. Children are, thus, subjected to endless activities and dispersive movement (“while we pedal, we listen to the teacher”, “while I work on the treadmill, I memorize the multiplication tables”). It is not, therefore, a simple temporal re-framing, but a broad temporal reconfiguration that produces disembodied transformations, alterations in our sensibility by first distributing new forms of feeling and then asking for certain ways of living. Most importantly, it represents an effort to frame education within the con-



nectionist paradigm, in which the “highest premium is placed on activity for its own sake, to always be doing something, to move, to change — this is what enjoys prestige, as against stability, which is often synonymous with inaction” (CRARY, 2013, p. 15).

Hence, being more agile is not the same as being free. It does not free children from bodily constraint, but it rather turns school, as a technology of our historical time, into another form of engineering, just as oppressive as the modern one. The crisis of disciplinary institutions means the conquest of new freedoms while proffering new forms of subjugation. In this case, it means compliance with another temporal model, or better yet, with a permanently modulating time principle. It shows us that a change in governance is underway, and, consequently, a shift in the very role of education. It demands a re-timing of school and requires new connections between education and the future, and individuals and risk. It is a process that interferes with the promises of education and imposes ideas regarding the kind of qualifications that pedagogical institutions should offer.

## Are students ready for the future?

In the future, if you want a job, you must be as unlike a machine as possible: creative, critical, and socially skilled. So why are children being taught to behave like machines? (...) Our schools teach skills that are not only redundant but counter-productive. Our children suffer this life-defying, de-humanizing system for nothing.

(George Monbiot)<sup>16</sup>

The call to update schooling is not just a petition for converting its rhythms into logics of flexibility, income, production, entertainment, innovation, and performance; it is also a matter of transforming the qualification this historical device teaches into more ‘useful’ and ‘productive skills’, in line with ‘the demands of the future’. More specifically, it is about reinventing education promises, turning its utopias into other types of dreams, such as that of security. In this process, curriculum becomes another cog within a ‘dysfunctional gear’. It becomes a piece that should be fixed, not so much because it is ‘inadequate’ for the utopias of the future that we are inventing, or because it is not appropriate for the future we want to build, but because it does not seem to be preparing students for an already known type of the future.

In this complex process, struggles against an authoritarian and disciplinary education are often misunderstood and mixed — at least in discursive

terms — with the demands of a new, no longer industrial, market. The English writer George Monbiot, for instance, in an article published in *The Guardian*, argues that future jobs will require skills that schools have not been teaching. Considering our schools “are still as they used to be when they were designed to produce the workforce required by 19<sup>th</sup>-century factories”, when children get to school, we suppress this “instinct by sitting them down, force-feeding them with inert facts and testing the life out of them”. In fact, among teachers, students and media, there is a quite present sense that we continue to send our children to schools that are extremely similar to the old disciplinary model: a “land that time has forgotten”, according to Laurene Powell Jobs, one of the founders and financiers of the XQ school project.<sup>17</sup>

Such analyses, to some extent, however, are already the effect of a significant displacement in the educational field. Although pedagogical institutions may not seem to have drastically changed, the logics, practices and values of these institutions have been invested with new purposes, lesser disciplinary logics, and organized through other evaluation and distinction systems. On occasions, this process has been carried out through the substitution of significant principles or replacements or conversions within the same apparatus. At other times, it is a matter of the perverse overlapping of contemporary and modern logics, which does not necessarily mean exclusion. Confinement hours, for example, are intensified by gym hours (as in brain activity laboratories) or permanent movement requirements, complemented at the same time by new outdoors dynamics or extra-class requirements and perpetual training, which no longer operate within the closed system duration. Traditional examinations are not only turned into a continuous assessment procedure, but they are also reinforced by online tasks and other responsibilities. The traditional hierarchy of surveillance is strengthened by a more diffuse type, which no longer distinguishes between being monitored and vigilant, since the monitor’s eye ends up multiplied, distributed over other surfaces of visibility.<sup>18</sup> The discipline-docile child (supposedly produced by the modern machine) is now also required to be creative, inventive, entrepreneurial, and ‘risk-taking’.

The traditional subjects taught at school now have to be presented through new approaches that are faster, more exciting, “based on what interest children most”, as attractive as games to the poor, bored kids. The very logics of the exams are being rearranged in meritocratic terms: they are no longer a necessary stage of a supposedly long education process, but increasingly mere data for internal and external rankings, a result of individual success or failure. Thus, children are still submitted to the frequent exams that demand a certain ability to accumulate content and which are not less scarier than they used to be. At the same time, they are expected to be up to par with the need for permanent adjustment to the current information flood. More than ever, young people are supposed to be well-informed multi-taskers, fast, and prepared for

coping with change. The knowledge that was crucial for the civilizing project and all its justifications regarding the autonomy of reason is becoming less important than practical ‘know-how or skills’. This is not a simple change, mere update, or evolution. It is, rather, a change that implies new governance and resistance forms. In this process of shifting and substituting logics, images of what lies ahead play a fundamental role.

“Will school be ready for the future?”, asks the American project “SQ super school”.<sup>19</sup> From their perspective, teachers need to raise their student’s expectations, teaching “truly relevant skills” and “moving away from abstract concepts”. A similar approach can be found in “The Future of Learning: Preparing for Change”, a report written by education experts and published in 2011 by the European Union Commission. It also promotes a certain image of the future that justifies, for example, a critique of the type of content traditionally made available by the school curriculum, which can be seen as revising the value of traditional knowledge conceptions. According to the report, “as knowledge is expected to be outdated faster due to shorter innovation circles, pure memorization of hard facts may become secondary to genuine understanding of general principles and *how-to* knowledge” (JRC, 2011, p. 76). As stated in another report published by the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC), although many youth, as well as adults, across Europe hold formal qualifications, they nonetheless demonstrate considerable deficits in basic cognitive and non-cognitive skills, the “most important capital for the world of work ahead” (EPSC, 2016, p. 8).

Indeed, the temporality evoked here is not accidental. It appears as the modern connection between future and education, again evoked, albeit displacing the terms. Know your risks or risk your future: this is the motto through which a certain quality of the future (a predicted, calculated, and simulated quality) is being constructed, one in which education narratives play a fundamental, rather than auxiliary or supporting, role. The expressions “the world of work ahead”, “society of the future”, “bridge to the future” or “the future nature of the work” not only naturalize the idea that the nature of future work and society is already visible, but also communicate that this naturalization takes place through the clear, sharp, precise images produced by experts and new technologies. When the American project XQ campaign asks, “Are students ready for the future?”, they are asking a rhetorical question based on their conviction that the future is already known. It is more than mere prognoses, insofar as it presupposes the future as a fixed picture, a table with numbers that have already been filled in. In this perspective, contemporary education narratives reinforce a sense of futurity based on prediction and risk. They strengthen the prediction discourse, in which the images of the future do not appear as the result of political imagination, but rather as that of expert foresights, or even better, as products of the sophisticated and supposedly accurate technology of calculation and

anticipation. Thereby, the probability is sketched out in terms of certainty, and the future seems to be already here. That which is to come then projects its light onto the present, as if it were dictating, for example, what kind of people will be better prepared to face the multiple risks of the “world ahead”. In particular, it casts images of what competences we should learn and what education reforms should be undertaken.

## Brief conclusions: now, you choose your future!

*One of the great political tasks to be fulfilled is the constant quest to make what is today impossible, possible tomorrow — and only insofar as at least some of that which is now impossible is made viable today.*

(Paulo Freire, 2001, p. 108)

The relationship between modern education and the progress project is, by no means, small considering all the implications the latter brought with it in terms of temporality, and above all, in the modern sense of futurity. Today, our current sense of futurity — based more and more on ideas, such as risk and security — is also deeply connected to education, forcing its temporal adaptation to become either more agile or to offer new promises. Over this course, education seems to be shrinking progressively from the glorious duty of building a ‘better future’ to now anchoring its narratives in a no less challenging place: to subsidize the management of a future that has already been foreseen by producing a type of ‘knowledge’ that reduces and prevents its impacts.

It is neither a lack of future in education narratives, nor the dearth of a role for education in the future that we are dealing with. Rather, it is a future known and narrated especially, and exhaustively, for its threat; a future that must be solved and a risk that must be reduced. Therefore, the time yet to come has not exactly been overshadowed, obscured, or eclipsed. Instead, it has been frozen within speech, preventing us from becoming freer of the burden of its image (as modern resistance might, one day, have wished). It is not exactly the interdiction of imagining the future, but the emptying of our ability to imagine a future different from the given predictions. It is a kind of insomnia, in face of the expected catastrophes of our era. Insomnia that makes the future imagination as narrow as the trap that has been set for Kafka’s rat (1971, p. 492). Even more importantly, and strange as it may seem, it is the draining of our ability to be responsible for history, considering we do not seem to believe that we are really able to change its course, or more precisely, to solve the damage we ourselves have done over the course of history.

This subtle narrative displacement slides from the duty to follow, plan, and build progress, to the duty of minimizing the dangers that progress brings with it. It is the slippage of two modes for the colonization of time, two modes of pre-orientation regarding the future: from a moment in which future progress justifies the disciplinarization of the whole social corpus in the present, to the moment in which risk substantiates permanent anticipation, a constant attempt to ‘correct’ the future. This is not to claim that risk was absent from modern disputes on the future. As Jeremy Bentham said in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, security in disciplinarian terms already had its eyes on the future. However, in addition to a shift of emphasis itself, there has also been a shift in the way we respond to it. Instead of progress as a horizon of expectations, contemporary society seems to construct risk as its great productive device, as that which legitimizes series of new permanent controls that are no longer restricted to appropriate places or subjects.

In this context, contemporary narratives on education play a significant role. They are not mere effects of changes in our sense of futurity, they are instruments of intensification of this experience, agents of the globalization of this discursivity, both within local realities (as in Brazilian educational reforms) and the world landscape. *As this article has shown*, the displacement of future experiences is associated with a widespread crisis in the meaning of education. This is a multiple, complex, and productive crisis since it engenders resignifications and temporal adjustments of the education machine as well as it creates new requirements, values, and truths. It spawns both novel freedoms and new forms of subjugation, demanding new configurations of subjectivities and aspirations.

Thus, our discussion suggests that the challenge of education today has become a matter of how to re-calibrate its promises, in order to transform the dream for the autonomy of reason into a desire to reduce hazards. Therefore, the mission of contemporary education takes on paradoxical contours: it presents itself, increasingly, as a technology to minimize future risks, but only insofar as it can individualize the responsibility of these same hazards. This is pushed even further: in order to do its job, education should become capable of turning individuals into investors — ‘free investors’ in their own education and risk management. As in the hollow motto of the Brazilian neoliberal educational reform campaign: “Now you are the one who will make your own future!”

## Notes

1. Brazilian government advertising for the Reform of High School Education, promulgated on February 16, 2017 (Law nº 13.415). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdERkLO3eTs>, published by the Ministry of Education on December 26, 2016. Accessed on: 24 jan. 2019.

2. “Bridge to the Future” is the title of the Temer government’s project. The propaganda campaign can be seen at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P\\_1iPX6Ui54](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_1iPX6Ui54). The project for the reform of high school education proposed by President Temer is a text full of ambiguities and lacking specifications. Meant to transform public high school education into the mere production of a supply for the labor force, it significantly sharpens the differences between public and private high schools. Law nº 13.415 (February 16, 2017). Available at: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_ato2015-2018/2017/lei/113415.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2017/lei/113415.htm). Accessed on: 11 mar. 2019.
3. Minister Mendonça Filho, report published on the Department of Education website on September 22, 2016. Available at <http://portal.mec.gov.br/component/tags/tag/39691>. Accessed on: 11 mar. 2019.
4. Department of Education website, published on January 26, 2017. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-M\\_ewoa0iY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-M_ewoa0iY). Accessed on: 11 mar. 2019.
5. Interview with Minister of Education Mendonça Filho, in “Government launches new high school including full-time education and new curriculum proposal”. Department of Education website, available at: <http://portal.mec.gov.br/component/tags/tag/39691>. Accessed on: 02 dec. 2019.
6. All expressions used in the marketing campaign for Temer’s Project for High School Reform.
7. In Brazil, as in others countries, this change in the horizon of expectations that unfolded in Europe produced ambivalent reverberations. On one hand, the voices of progress seem to unveil a new kind of future, something that integrates Brazilian history into world history as one singular progressive collective, albeit a process that implied a much lesser degree of progress. As Reinhart Koselleck comments, it is not only the phenomena of progress that are unevenly distributed socially; currently, progress affects a greater part of the world negatively (KOSELLECK, 2002, p. 234). On the other hand, such displacements also seem to produce their complementary aversion: conservative reactions that, losing ground in Europe, try to maintain their strength in the “new world”.
8. For a more in-depth analysis about the concept futurologies, see Willer (2016).
9. Pedagogical institutions and projects around the world are increasingly trying to reform school time, creating movements such as the English “Empty Classroom Day” (<http://emptyclassroomday.eu>) or the “Outdoor Classroom Day” (<https://outdoorclassroomday.com>) — a “global campaign to celebrate and inspire outdoor learning and play”. Accessed on: 05 dec. 2019.
10. See the newspaper report “The schools where they never say ‘sit still’”, published in The Guardian, on November 21, 2015. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/nov/21/schools-education-teaching-exercise-better-learners>. Accessed on: 05 dec. 2019.
11. See the newspaper report “In these Charleston, S.C., Schools, children are seen, and heard, and always active, published in the Washington Post on October 20, 2015. Available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/sports/wp/2015/10/20/educational-movement/?utm\\_term=.8b7e2e30452a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/sports/wp/2015/10/20/educational-movement/?utm_term=.8b7e2e30452a). Accessed on: 02 dec. 2019.
12. All citations on the Charleston, S.C. school in this paragraph are based on the two newspaper reports mentioned above.
13. “Active Schools” is an American movement that intends to help schools access the best practices, programs, and resources. See at: <https://www.activeschoolsus.org>. Accessed on: 02 dec. 2019.

14. See the newspaper report “The schools where they never say ‘sit still’”, published in The Guardian, on November 21, 2015. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/nov/21/schools-education-teaching-exercise-better-learners>. Accessed on: 02 dec. 2019.
15. On the ‘activity paradigm’, see also Boltanski and Chiapello (2016).
16. In an age of robots, schools are teaching our children to be redundant. Published in The Guardian, on February 15, 2017. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/15/robots-schools-teaching-children-redundant-testing-learn-future>. Accessed on: 02 dec. 2019.
17. See: <https://www.ozy.com/opinion/the-story-behind-the-xq-super-school-project/71041>. Accessed on: 02 dec. 2019.
18. Regarding distributed surveillance, see Bruno (2013).
19. The Super School Project, a competition that invited America to “reimagine high school”. All quotation marks in this paragraph referring to this project were excerpts from the description available on the website (2015): <https://xqsuperschool.org/about>. Accessed on: 02 dec. 2019.

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