



Digitalisation of adult education management and hyper-bureaucracy*

Digitalización de la gestión de la educación de adultos y hiperburocracia

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Abstract:

This essay problematises the digitalisation of adult education management, including elements such as digital learning, technological applications for teaching and learning, management, evaluation, electronic platforms of various kinds, as well as software aimed at inscribing the universe of adult education in digital world. In terms of governance and management, one of the promises of digitalisation is to reduce bureaucracy. New post-bureaucratic educational organisations would guarantee more freedom, flexibility and choice for adult learners. However, this scenario will be analysed based on a working hypothesis that associates the use of digital machines to govern and organise adult education with the emergence of processes of high rationalisation and formalisation, in an interpretation based on the Weberian theory of bureaucracy. Although it is accepted that the platformisation of adult education contains democratic potential, the text focuses

Resumen:

Este ensayo problematiza la digitalización de la gestión de la educación de adultos, incluyendo elementos como el aprendizaje digital, las aplicaciones tecnológicas para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, la gestión, la evaluación, las plataformas electrónicas de diversos tipos, así como el software destinado a inscribir el universo de la educación de adultos en el mundo digital. En términos de gobernanza y gestión, una de las promesas de la digitalización es reducir la burocracia. Las nuevas organizaciones educativas posburocráticas garantizarían más libertad, flexibilidad y capacidad de elección a los estudiantes adultos. Sin embargo, este escenario será analizado a partir de una hipótesis de trabajo que asocia el uso de máquinas digitales para gobernar y organizar la educación de adultos con la emergencia de procesos de alta racionalización y formalización, en una interpretación basada en la teoría weberiana de la burocracia. Aunque se acepta que la plataformaización de la educación de adultos contiene un potencial democrático, el

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attention on the processes of digital domination and rational-informational authority. Formal rationality has the capacity to produce algorithmic decisions, unprecedented forms of control and surveillance, typical of what the author calls hyper-bureaucracy. The dilemma is that without digitalisation processes we can hardly move forward in adult education as in other fields, but with it we run the risk of moving backwards in human, democratic, and emancipatory terms.

Keywords: Adult education; Governance; Digital platforms; Bureaucracy; Hyper-bureaucracy.

texto centra la atención en los procesos de dominación digital y de autoridad racional-informacional. La racionalidad formal tiene la capacidad de producir decisiones algorítmicas, formas de control y vigilancia sin precedentes, propias de lo que el autor denomina hiperburocracia. El dilema es que sin procesos de digitalización difícilmente podremos avanzar en la educación de adultos como en otros campos, pero con ella corremos el riesgo de retroceder en términos humanos, democráticos y emancipatorios.

Palabras clave: Educación de adultos; Gobernanza; Plataformas digitales; Burocracia; Hiperburocracia.

Introduction

The perspective adopted in this essay is one of problematisation of the process of digitalisation of adult education, starting from an initial position that rejects the demonisation of new information technologies, digital management, automatic decision-making machines, and generative Artificial Intelligence. These are all amazing human creations, many of which have been available and in use for some time, without which it would no longer be possible to operate and solve problems in certain areas. In some fields, advances with enormous potential for human development, for example in medicine are expected.

That said, if this text does not demonise the so-called 'digital revolution', it never naturalises it through a naïve position, accepting without critical examination the epic and grandiloquent discourses of a new digital marvel that supposedly would float in the clouds, beyond specific agendas and interests, out of power relations and political choices. What it is affirmed here, without ignoring the democratic potential of digital machines, is that machines that impact on adult education, subordinated to technical reason, to the control and surveillance of pedagogical practices, with the capacity to extend these actions to all areas of educational practice, rationalising and formalising all processes - pedagogical, relational, curricular, evaluative, didactic, organisational, and managerial - will be hyper-bureaucratic machines without parallel in the history of adult education. At this point in time, even without considering the future impacts, for example in the classroom, of facial recognition technologies, among others of sensory recognition and tracking of movements and actions in different digital environments, hyper-bureaucratic machines and new forms of digital domination present unprecedented risks for democracy and for the education of adults as a practice of freedom and a process of humanising human beings (Freire, 1967; 1997).

To paraphrase Shoshana Zuboff, (2019) we may be facing an era of *surveillance* adult education, with the aggravating factor that we will not even be talking

about education, but more plausibly about changes in behaviour associated with skills considered to be of high instrumental value. A context in which the training, conditioning, inculcation and programming of human beings would result from processes of personal optimisation and isomorphic adaptation by new 'machine appendages', now digital machines infinitely more intelligent than when that expression began to be used as a critique of capitalist production.

It is crucial to start by observing that the fall of bureaucracy as a type of organisation that "gradually penetrated all social institutions", according to the expression of Nicos Mouzelis (1975, p. 18), was prematurely announced. The discourses guaranteeing the emergence of post-bureaucratic organisation and governance, as an alternative capable of overcoming many of the characteristics that Max Weber (1964) brought together in the constellation of dimensions that he called 'bureaucracy' (as a sociological concept), have also proved premature. In its purest form, the "bureaucratic administrative framework" is made up of appointed officials who act according to ten criteria (Weber, 1964, pp. 333-334): 1) officials are individually free and are only subject to authority as far as the impersonal exercise of their official duties is concerned; 2) they are organised in a clearly defined hierarchy of posts; 3) each post has a clearly defined sphere of competence, in the legal sense; 4) the post is filled through a free contractual relationship, and there is, in principle, free selection; 5) candidates for the post are selected on the basis of their technical qualifications and, in the most rational case, through examinations or the guarantee of diplomas certifying technical training, and are appointed, not elected; 6) they are remunerated through fixed salaries in cash, in most cases with the right to pensions, and salaries are differentiated according to category, and may also include the criteria of the responsibility of the post and social status, and the official is free to resign; 7) the post is treated as the only, or at least the main occupation carried out by the official; 8) the post is part of a career path, with a system of promotion according to seniority or performance, or both, depending on the assessment of superiors; 9) the official works entirely separately from the ownership of administrative resources and without ownership of his/her post; 10) his/her performance in the post is subject to strict and systematic discipline and control.

The radicalisation of some of the organisational dimensions of bureaucracy - according to the theorisation of the German sociologist - and particularly of its power and speed, through informational flows, are signs that justify admitting hyper-bureaucracy as a working hypothesis. In this case, it will be a question of an increase in bureaucracy, the result of a process of hybridisation that sometimes loses, sometimes maintains, certain features of Weberian bureaucracy, eventually associating new dimensions to the original 'ideal type', which acquires new and broader dimensions; complex properties of extension and control, among others, induced by a digital bureaucracy, or cyber-bureaucracy.

The hypothesis of hyper-bureaucracy, especially reinforced by technological changes capable of providing it with greater intensity and scope, greater reliability and capacity for rational calculation, greater speed, proves to be compatible with the logic of modernisation and the respective valorisation of technical-instrumental rationality.

Studied and criticised by Weber, the rationalisation inherent in modern society and in public and private organisations of all kinds - companies, states, churches, political parties, clubs, trade unions (Weber, 1964, p. 330) - would imply an “irreversible expansion of bureaucracy” (Beetham, 1988, p. 86) or, in the words of Martin Albrow (1970, p. 45), the certainty that “rational bureaucracy was bound to increase in importance”. The hypothesis of an increased and radicalised bureaucracy in some of its dimensions, favoured by the use of new technologies, is entirely compatible with the thinking expressed by Weber, for whom capitalism – “modern rational capitalism”, as he called it in his work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 1983) - constituted the most rational economic basis for the development of bureaucracy, and for large-scale bureaucratic management, further served by conditions of communication and transport that would increase its precision and efficiency in terms of operation, requiring for this purpose “railway, telegraph and telephone services”, and becoming increasingly dependent on them (Weber, 1964, p. 339).

The technical-instrumental superiority of bureaucratic organisation - which will lead the author of *Economy and Society* to declare that he knew of no real alternative - “In the field of management, there is only a choice between bureaucracy and dilettantism” -, as he stated (Weber, 1964, p. 337) - is associated with an axiological framework that rejects subjectivity, feelings and emotions, in order to subordinate everything to rational calculation.

In any case, the association so common today, between state or public management and bureaucracy, and between business or private initiative and innovation that overcomes bureaucratic organisation, does not make sense from a sociological perspective, as well as in the light of empirical research on industrial bureaucracy (Gouldner, 1964). For Weber, both spheres shared the incessant search for the ‘*optimum*’, the optimal relationship between means and ends, within the more general framework of an economic rationality which is, after all, an indelible mark of modern capitalism and of ‘Americanisation’ as processes of economic, managerial and organisational rationalisation and formalisation.

The digitisation of adult education and the machines for its governance and management

As far as adult education is concerned, the process of its digitalisation, which will be related here to the Weberian concept of bureaucracy, started a few decades ago, including, in particular, distance education and digital learning, technological applications for teaching and learning, management, evaluation and inspection, electronic platforms of various kinds, as well as software specifically aimed at inscribing the universe of adult education in the so-called digital world.

International organisations refer, most of the times in epic tones, to the digital revolution, as well as to the demands of the digital transition, with adult education and vocational training systems responsible for producing digital skills that are seen as a driver of economic and social development. This is the case, for example, of the

European Union (2020), which in its action plan for digital education (2021-2027) draws attention to the urgency of applying digital technologies to education, learning, and leadership, through applications, platforms and software, an urgency that was reinforced by the pandemic. The OECD (2024, p.3) highlights the benefits of Artificial Intelligence to “improve the welfare and wellbeing of people, contribute to positive sustainable global economic activity, increase innovation and productivity, and help to key global changes”. However, it does not refer to the risks inherent to Artificial Intelligence but only to “challenges”, even when referring to outputs, such as “prediction, content recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments” (OECD, 2024, p.7). UNESCO (2019, p. 6) also focuses more on solutions than on problems, mentioning the creation of learning solutions, the improvement of learning outcomes and its personalisation, intelligent tutoring systems, education management. Teaching English to 600,000 students “at the cost of a single teacher” and developing a “superteacher capable of answering million simultaneous questions from students”, are some of the examples presented from the Chinese experience. UNESCO also highlights the role of the EdTech industry as a main innovation actor, mentioning several companies such as Pearson, McGraw-Hill, IBM, Knewton, Smart Parrow, Cerego, Coursera, which “are advancing in the introduction of adaptive learning through intelligent algorithms that use Big Data to personalise learning” (UNESCO, 2019, p. 26). These policy documents tend to assume a certain technological determinism, from training and skills instruments to the macro level reform of the state, the network global governance, and the strategic role of public-private partnerships.

The critical study of generative Artificial Intelligence implications for adult education, including teaching strategies, learning materials, assessment of students, assigning tasks to individual students, personalized feedback to teachers and students, curriculum design (Milana, Brondi, Hodge and Hoggan-Kloubert, 2024) appears in other studies under the logic of the skills deficits of adult educators and the urgent need to “replace the traditional andragogical model of adult training” in order to take all the advantages of Artificial Intelligence and of machine learning, natural language processing, data mining, neural networks, algorithms, and other typical elements of the “intelligent society” (Storey and Wagner, 2024, p. 2), again based on technological determinism (formal rationality) over the substantive thinking and the practices of adult education (material rationality).

The fourth industrial revolution is underway and affects all human activities and institutions, from the digital state and e-governance to e-management, ensuring the modernisation and dematerialisation of the administrative phenomenon, promising its de-bureaucratisation, greater democratic openness to citizens, transparency, high efficiency and quality, greater access, decentralisation and participation of the administered. The uses of generative Artificial Intelligence and robotics, 5G, the Internet of Things, and even facial recognition technologies, will change, and are already changing, institutions and social relations, organisations and modes of governance, the exercise of power, and certainly also schools and universities, research centres, and adult education institutions. School textbooks, students’

notebooks, teachers' reports, tests and assessment processes, individualised teaching materials, technologically mediated courses and materials, financial and people management, career development, lifelong learning programmes and continuing education, are some of the most visible examples.

The benefits claimed are considered, and will be much more so in the future, formidable, especially concerning generative Artificial Intelligence. What apparently more rigorous and rapid objectivity could exist today, in the information society, than that which proves capable of replacing, at least partially, professionals specialised and subject to rational rules, with new computer machines produced by the hyper-industrial society and economy (Harris, 2001, pp. 693-697)?

The line of work adopted here criticises managerialist promises of de-bureaucratisation, admits the continuing relevance of rational-legal authority and its possible transmutation into rational-informational authority, served by information and communication technologies and their respective instruments of digital control and surveillance. In other words, it seeks to draw attention to the need to study new forms of digital domination of adult educational organisations and management, which may result in an augmented bureaucracy.

Why should we abandon the Weberian idea of the superiority of bureaucratic organisation in purely technical terms, precisely when its intensification is computationally possible? There are sufficient reasons to admit, following the German sociologist, that if a bureaucratic mechanism was for large-scale organisations and management what the machine was for manufacturing by non-mechanical methods, so it will also be for digital management in the information society. In both cases we will be facing the predominance of instrumental values and technical reason (which Weber called formal rationality), with greater risks of dehumanisation, of the eventual replacement of the dictatorship of the bureaucrat by the dictatorship of the platform, or of facing a new bureaucracy in which the iron cage criticised by Weber could now give way to an electronic cage. The technologies of speed and acceleration, calculation and measurement, recording and management of large masses of data allow for new instruments of regulation and control, the erosion of democracy, the recentralisation of heteronomous educational and administrative decisions.

New Public Management, digitalisation and de-bureaucratisation

Now considered to be slow and costly, typical of the state and of public organisations and management, bureaucracy could only be overcome by adopting market principles and private management. Ignoring the fact that the market and companies were, to a large extent, the cradle of bureaucratic domination in the Weberian sense, just as they are today the propitious contexts for its projection and exponential intensification. But the enterprise, apparently uncontaminated by bureaucratic dimensions, began to present itself as an archetype of innovation and modernisation of public management, a reformist vector that resulted in the critically designated "managerial state" (Clarke and Newman, 1997, p. 65): the new management would defeat the old regime of power, which was based on bureaucracy,

professionalism and political representation. Thus, although syncretic and fragmented, the new rationalisation of public management, including educational management, was proposed paradoxically on the base of the assimilation of practices of private management and of an entrepreneurial spirit presented as capable of regenerating the public domain. As if private organisations constituted a rational, efficient and effective universe in terms of economy and optimisation of resources and, at the same time, free of bureaucratic dimensions or synonymous with post-bureaucracy.

Theories generally known under the ambiguous designation of New Public Management (Hood, 1991), have influenced reforms of the state, public management and its organisations, presenting regulatory alternatives, modes of delivery, new instruments of action, public-private partnerships and other forms of contractualism. In the case of education, the quality of public organisations could only be achieved through the modernisation of schools, universities, adult education centres, etc. The solution would lie in new management and new leaders to reform education, rationalise the organisations and guarantee their quality and performativity, in the image of private companies. Reinventing Government, New Public Management, New Governance (see, among others, Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Gore, 1996; Salamon, 2000) have become important references for educational reforms, critically called managerialist reforms, given the centrality attributed to companies and management instruments presented under the sign of post-bureaucracy (see, for example, the critiques of Smyth, 2011; Verger and Normand, 2015; Ranson, 2016).

The work of John Chubb and Terry Moe (1990), published in the United States of America, is considered as a seminal work of the new managerialism in education. There, democratic control is associated with bureaucracy and the loss of autonomy by schools; autonomy and competitiveness with high performance; leadership of principals with school success; choice and vouchers with decisive reform against school bureaucracy. The replacement of state control and the role of professional educators by control exercised by families, who can express their free choices as customers, represents a key management proposal in neoliberalism.

The promise to reduce bureaucracy, one of the central themes of New Public Management, was associated from the beginning with the digitalisation of governance and management. Indeed, digitalisation has had a major impact on public management and has led to the dematerialisation of its processes, in terms of e-governance. However, it would be fallacious to conclude that such dematerialisation has guaranteed the promised reduction of bureaucracy or the emergence of post-bureaucratic organisations. Firstly, because domination of a rational-legal kind is institutionalised, having resulted from long-standing socially constructed processes of rationalisation, historically and culturally embedded, articulated with the development of capitalism, moulded in the legal and normative structures of liberal democracies. Bureaucratic organisations as modern instruments, and especially in sectors such as education and health, have proven to be inescapable, as they do not do without specialised professionals, even when they are subject to widespread criticism and intense scrutiny (Lane, 2000, p. 21). Secondly, dematerialisation, the use of computer platforms and other digital devices have realised several dimensions of bureaucracy

that only fast and reliable devices could achieve, aiming at universal rules, uniformity and standardisation, objectivity, calculation and measurement, surveillance and remote control over actors. Finally, technical and instrumental rationality is expanding without precedent, making use of information technologies, of flattened organisational structures, of centralised planning and decentralised operations, of the use of written and formal rules digitally inscribed on platforms, of digital modes of supervision which, in global terms, are hybrid and apparently contradictory, but which, nevertheless, have not prevented research from refuting the thesis of a break with organisational bureaucracy (e. g. Dellagnelo and Machado-da-Silva, 2000). The complexity and hybridisation of political and administrative reforms suggest that the new managerialism has proved to be quite influential, although subject to different appropriations, never independent of the contexts of reception, and that is why the concept of “neo-Weberian state” was developed by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011), and that Farrell and Morris (2003) refer to the “neo-bureaucratic state”.

Bureaucratic organisation and management have changed considerably, it is true, but they are far from extinction. The widespread digitalisation and the dematerialisation of administrative processes did not guarantee the reduction of bureaucracy. Electronic platforms were included in the process of increasing regulation of adult education by digital means (what could be called digital regulation), and it can be admitted that rational-legal authority was not dethroned but is expanding and possibly transforming as a form of rational-informational domination. Digital platforms as “policy instruments” (Lascoumes and Le Galès, 2007) are also defining problems and solutions in adult education through mechanisms such as datafication, commodification, and governance, in search of new education imaginaries and the optimisation of learning experiences (Karges and Kalenda, 2024, pp. 104-106).

Electronic platforms and rational-informational authority

Indeed, platforms have progressively penetrated the field of education organisation and management practices. The research by Catalão and Pires inventoried around two dozen computer platforms made available by the Portuguese Ministry of Education, tools that the authors considered as instruments for regulating school organisation and management. Several respondents in that study did not fail to refer to “instruments of bureaucratic intensification”, including adult education programmes located in regular schools (Catalão and Pires, 2020, p. 101). Regular schools whose principals considered that the prominence of electronic platforms functioned as an instrument of control and as an obstacle to the exercise of pedagogic autonomy (Lima, Sá and Silva, 2020, p. 45).

The digital management of schools, adult education centres, and higher education institutions is in an accelerated process of implementation, through the use of platforms that, more than simple instruments or tools, emerge as management machines and non-organic actors, endowed with automated decision-making capacity in various areas, with regimes of rules, with the ability to exercise active surveillance, to monitor actions, to issue alerts and warnings, to produce calculations and perform

evaluations, to present statistics and represent them graphically in a variable way. All this in a constant and uninterrupted manner, with the systematicity and calculability of a machine, as well as with specialisation, with greater objectivity and impersonality than a specialised employee in a bureaucratic organisation would be able to do.

The organisational programme thus becomes, in large part, the digital programme, served by an algorithmic technology, generalising a bureaucratic *habitus*. Research has also highlighted new processes of centralised control, which hinder the exercise of autonomy, including “increased educational documentation and bureaucracy” (Schmoelz, 2023, p. 737). The digital reconfiguration of educational management, studied by Neil Selwyn (2011), made it possible to confront discourses on openness, democratisation, transparency and decentralisation, with practices of bureaucratic control, i.e. through forms of managerial control over the curriculum, the pedagogical work process, the accountability procedures.

In the case of online education platforms, a study by Grimaldi and Ball (2020) that included the global *EdTech* market, composed of well-known platforms such as Blackboard, Moodle and Canvas, observed that these and other ‘learning solutions’ are not only industrial and market products, but also relevant educational actors, changing the character of education: changing its concept, the meaning of being educated, and the educational experiences.

Rationalisation and formalisation, with their empirical dimensions, can contribute to situations of rational-informational domination that, in the limit, can escape the exercise of legal and democratic authority. This is increasingly possible through real-time analytical platforms with automatic feedback, inducing the management of distance education, compressing time, producing graphical forms of world representation, predictions, scenarios and even pedagogical prescriptions (Williamson, 2016, pp. 132-133).

Situations, among others, in which the rational-legal domination theorised by Weber can come to be articulated with new standards of rationality, giving way to hybrid modalities of rational-legal-informational domination or, at the limit, undergoing processes of transformation towards a formal rationality already digitally imposed, especially because it is inscribed in the core, in the interstices, of cyber-bureaucracy, i.e. an informational rationality that expresses itself through the production, management and representation of large-scale data, in search of continuous optimisation, favouring evidence, enumeration and quantification of facts, to the detriment of contextualised narrative and hermeneutic dimensions which are central to adult education. One indicator of this is the loss of meaning of reports that narrate and interpret actions, largely replaced by the uploading of objective data onto electronic platforms, which then produce conclusions and clusters of new data. Associated with this, the perspectives of management and personal optimisation emerge as principles of human capital formation, from an individualised digital perspective (Han, 2015 p. 39), in search of individuals in a process of continuous *updating*, abandoning the idea of an educational process as individual and social improvement, slow and uncertain, aimed at the humanisation and transformation of the social world.

Conclusion: digital domination and hyper-bureaucratic adult education

The old bureaucracy based on rules and governance through formalisation will have been transformed into a bureaucracy based on numbers and governance through competitive performance and respective measurement processes. This has resulted in a more powerful, more intelligent and faster digital bureaucracy, capable of algorithmic decision-making in various areas of adult education and vocational training, in certain cases without human intervention, in other words, an educational hyper-bureaucracy (Lima, 2012).

Meanwhile, post-bureaucracy represents a promise that remains unfulfilled and, more than that, does not seem easy to achieve in education under “contemporary capitalism in its digital age” (Saura, Peroni, Pires, and Lima, 2024). To link the neoliberal management of organisations, under the sign of the company, the market and contractualism, with the fight against bureaucracy as a rational-legal authority represents, on a theoretical level, a fallacy.

At least since the 19th century, modern business has emerged from the application of the rules of modern bureaucracy to the private sector.

David Graeber (2015) drew attention to the fact that bureaucracy and competitive markets are not incompatible and, instead, observed how bureaucracy tends to increase under market conditions, i.e. by creating new forms of regulation and administrative processes, increasing a certain type of government employees. As he states, “any market system requires an army of employees” (Graeber, 2015, p. 11). Even deregulation will not reduce bureaucracy, as it will tend to replace some rules with others, varying interests. For all these reasons, he concludes, perhaps hyperbolically, that we are observing a phenomenon of the extension of bureaucracy to all fields, speaking in this sense of the ‘era of total bureaucratisation’.

Digital domination increases the possibilities of obedience to rules, to chained procedural details, to automated decisions, which are no longer only, and above all, inscribed in voluminous codes and repositories of education legislation, but are implicitly present, sometimes invisibly, in complex digital devices that every educational actor is forced to use, in most cases without alternative. A new coercion takes place in the context of a digital culture that imposes itself as a culture of rationalisation and domination of education institutions, again largely subjected to compliance with routines, albeit now, electronic ones. Adult education platforms tend to show “an emphasis on standardisation and homogeneity” (Perrota and Pangrazio, 2023, p. 5), translating educational practices and learning experiences into numerical data typical of digital governance. The result is “a new form of bureaucracy that ushers in new literacies, new pedagogies, and new implications for adult education research and practice” (Smythe, 2018, p. 198).

Bureaucracy was not only neither fought nor dethroned but increased from the moment it dematerialised. Hyper-bureaucracy represents one of the most extraordinary processes of heteronomous governance in adult education, of loss of autonomy and freedom of actors, although, paradoxically, adopted in the name of their

autonomy, freedom and choice. Subjugated to an intensified formal rationality, adult education is both more irrational in substantive terms (ends) and more rational in formal terms (means). It is with the increasing bureaucratisation of adult education, made possible by digitalisation and by machines to manage education, that the ethical and aesthetic, relational and emotional, democratic and participatory dimensions of the humanisation of human beings, among others, are potentially diminished and eventually may become impossible in the future. Adult learners may then become objects of hyper-rationalised and highly individualised programmes of skills optimisation, human resources at the service of other powers and interests but hardly subjects of their own education and destiny.

But despite the crucial role of digital machines and their increasingly intelligent and autonomous status, it makes no sense to personify them and endow them with anthropomorphic attributes, as they are objects of human creation, objects used in the service of interests and agendas, projects and competencies, which have a more intense and systematic impact on educational processes.

Anyone familiar with Max Weber's sociological concept of bureaucracy - far beyond managerialist and common sense receptions - as well as with his critiques of formal rationality, will conclude that there is no significant break in theoretical terms; simply a question of greater intensity, complexity and hybridisation of dimensions, which can best be understood through the concept of hyper-bureaucracy, an interpretation compatible with the core of the Weberian ideal type.

The dilemma we face today is that without digitalisation processes and management machines we hardly can move forward in adult education as in other fields, but with it we run the risk of moving backwards in human, democratic, and emancipatory terms. A problem that certainly requires new problematisations.

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