

The Production and Reproduction of Educational Inequalities in the Formation of Brazil's Working Class

Célia Vendramini, Adriana D'Agostini, Carolina Picchetti Nascimento, Sandra Luciana Dalmagro
University of Santa Catarina, Brazil

Abstract Against the backdrop of the growing devaluation of the value of labor power and the persistence of the structural duality of the national education system, this article aims to analyze how profound inequalities in the Brazilian schooling process take shape nowadays. This discussion is supported by a set of empirical data from three state primary and secondary schools and one Youth and Adult Education center and highlights the conditions under which children and young people study, including the relationship between the process of social reproduction of their families and the logic underpinning the organization of pedagogical work in schools.

Keywords Social reproduction. Educational inequality. State education. Working class. Schooling.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Schooling in Brazil as a Process of the Essential Qualification of Labor Power. – 3 Analysis of the Conditions Under Which Children and Young People Study. – 4 Final Considerations.



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1 Introduction

Understanding inequality in the schooling process in Brazil requires examining the relationship between the social function of the school and processes of access to, retention in, and learning within basic education. Regarding this dynamic, two educational projects for new generations come into conflict: one aimed at reproducing existing social relations by adapting individuals to capitalist sociability, and another that confronts this sociability in the direction of its transformation. This historical dispute, however, takes place under conditions that do not pose a threat to bourgeois hegemony.

In a context marked by the widespread devaluation of labor power, rising unemployment and underemployment, and the reproduction of the structural duality of the national education system, which differentiates the education of children and young people according to social class, ethno-racial background, and place of birth, it is essential to understand how deep inequalities in the Brazilian schooling process are manifested today.

In this article, we analyze how children and young people's living conditions in Brazilian state schools (materialized in the social reproduction process of their families) and the pedagogical conditions within the schooling process (materialized in the logic of the organization of pedagogical work and in teachers' working conditions) create and shape students' relationship with study.

The axis guiding the analysis is social reproduction, which is inextricably linked to the mode of social production. According to Lefebvre (2000), social reproduction encompasses three interconnected processes: biological reproduction; the reproduction of labor power; and the reproduction of social relations of production within capitalist society. In this article, we address reproduction as it relates to the sale of labor power for the production of the means of subsistence of the proletariat, which requires meeting not only needs such as food, shelter, cleanliness, hygiene, health, affection, and care, but also schooling for children and young people to integrate into social life.

This article aims to discuss how schooling shapes the current conditions for the reproduction of labor power, which are marked by a vast reserve army of labor (Marx 2017) undergoing an ongoing process of devaluation. The reflections and syntheses presented here are drawn from a collective research project developed by the Centre for Studies on Transformations in the World of Work at the Federal

University of Santa Catarina.¹ The study is based on a literature review, an analysis of census and statistical data, and field research conducted in three primary and secondary schools and one Youth and Adult Education center in the municipality of Florianópolis, in southern Brazil, using observation, questionnaires, and interviews.

2 Schooling in Brazil as a Process of the Essential Qualification of Labor Power

Education has historically been fertile ground for idealist currents of thought. Within these perspectives, education, particularly schooling, is presented as a solution to complex social problems such as inequality, unemployment, environmental destruction, violence, and prejudice. From the other side of this socially detached perspective, education emerges as the entity held responsible for these very problems.

In *School and Democracy* (Saviani 1999), when focusing on the problem of educational marginalization, the author argues that such understandings constitute what is called “non-critical theories”. These theories view education as autonomous from the social totality and, therefore, either as the cause of inequality in school performance or as having the potential to equalize performance regardless of objective conditions. By contrast, according to the author, “critical theories” are those that relate education to its social determinants:

social determinants, that is, the socioeconomic structure that conditions the way in which the educational phenomenon manifests itself. (Saviani 1999, 17)

Understanding that education is part of the social totality means recognizing that individuals are educated according to the specific needs of each mode of production, so that they are qualified to act in the process of production and reproduction of the set of social relations.

It can therefore be argued that education is not something that precedes human activity, but rather takes place within the very act of production and reproduction of existing social relations. It is through social activity that individuals are educated, and this constitutes the decisive element in the educational process, according to Marxist Educational Theory (Suchodolski 1976). Marx and Engels (2007) had

1 Both internal and international migrants were considered. Antunes, Oliveira and Van der Laan (2025) use the concept of “uberized work”. These data do not account for people experiencing homelessness, those living in urban or rural occupations, families living in overcrowded housing, individuals who are permanently hospitalized, or other related situations.

already pointed to this profound articulation in the Third Thesis on Feuerbach, noting that human beings shape the environment in which they act to the same extent that they are educated by it. Therefore, we must situate ourselves within the terrain of history to analyze the specificities of educational processes mediated through schooling.

In a study of the history of education in Brazil, Otaíza Romanelli highlights the condition of a country that, for four-fifths of its history, was both a slaveholding society and a colony of Portugal. The slave mode of production did not require schools to educate the mass of working subjects, as the relations of production themselves were sufficient for this purpose. Thus, the expansion of schooling in Brazil gained greater momentum only with industrialization, from the 1930s onwards, when the country sought development and modernization and began, for the first time, to promote compulsory attendance in the first four years of primary education. This expansion, although significant, was marked by structural limitations: an insufficient supply of school places, low performance within the school system, and marked social discrimination (Romanelli 2007).

According to Romanelli (2007), in 1970 only 30.13% of Brazil's population aged 5 to 24 were enrolled in education. Despite subsequent growth, this figure remained very low on the eve of the third millennium, and regional inequalities are stark throughout the entire schooling trajectory. In 1966, the dropout rate in the first year of primary school was 33.45%, and among those who managed to remain in school, only 22.77% completed primary education without failing a grade and having to repeat the school year, revealing the highly selective nature of the school system.

In light of this scenario of low levels of schooling, a high rate of illiteracy, widespread grade repetition, and the limited quality of the education system, it became a consensus that Brazilian education was underdeveloped. However, Romanelli (2007, 256) questions whether this supposed lag might not have had a "certain functionality, both for the political order and for the economic order". Brazil occupied (and continues to occupy) a subordinate position in the international division of labor; it is a dependent economy that plays a key role in the dynamics of international capitalism. Industrialization developed, with few exceptions, through the purchase of foreign technology at a high cost and required only elementary levels of worker qualification. Corresponding to this productive model is a particular pedagogical and political project.

Romanelli (2007) demonstrates that a school grounded in the development of science and of scientific and critical thinking does not align with this particular development project. Thus, Brazilian education is not lagging behind; rather, it corresponds to the type of qualification required for work and for political participation as demanded by peripheral and dependent capitalism.

In the 1980s, a period marked by the strengthening of the democratic field and the weakening of the dictatorship, approximately 30% of the Brazilian population was illiterate, and the country had a dual and fragmented education system. There were persistent and serious problems of access to schooling in rural and urban peripheral regions, as well as high rates of school 'dropout' and semi-illiteracy among those who did gain access to school. Nevertheless, this decade was significant for educational and social policies, albeit in a contradictory manner. With the end of the military-business dictatorship in 1985 and the promulgation of the 1988 'Citizen Constitution', compulsory schooling was progressively extended from the first to the eighth year of primary education (roughly ages 6 to 14). At the same time, a system of education funding was established, linking education to federal revenue. It was also during this period that the need to reform the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional - LDB*) was recognized, a reform that was ultimately implemented in 1996.

The 1990s were marked by the implementation of neoliberal policies, characterized by privatization and the erosion of limited rights gained under the newly enacted Citizen Constitution. During this decade, Brazil's subordination to multilateral organizations intensified, particularly concerning educational reforms and policies. Key reference points were the international guidelines established at the World Conference on Education for All and the recommendations of the Delors Report (*UNESCO 1996 - Education for the Twenty-First Century*). During this period, the concept of basic education was created, encompassing early childhood education, primary education, and secondary education (a total of 14 years), alongside efforts to universalize access to basic education. However, the foundations were also laid for neoliberal-oriented curricular reforms, such as the National Curriculum Parameters (1997), the National Common Curricular Base (2016-7), and the Upper Secondary Education Reform (2017).

It is evident that, even as the years of schooling and the length of the school day increase, the teaching of systematized scientific, artistic, and philosophical knowledge declines, making way for basic competencies linked to the world of work and the demands of maintaining the prevailing social order. Saviani (1999) argues that the more democracy is spoken about, the less democratic schools become. This argument is supported by data from our research, particularly in relation to the managerialist logic that dominates education systems. Schools and teachers are increasingly required to implement greater bureaucratization, undergo external assessments, carry out activities that fragment the teaching process, and adopt sophisticated forms of control through digital applications and platforms.

3 Analysis of the Conditions Under Which Children and Young People Study

In this section, we analyze how the living conditions of children and young people attending Brazilian state schools (materialized in the process of social reproduction of their families) and the pedagogical conditions within the schooling process (materialized in the logic of the organization of pedagogical work and in teachers' working conditions) create and/or shape children's and young people's relationship with study.

To this end, we draw on data extracted from field research involving five state primary and secondary schools and one Youth and Adult Education center in the municipality of Florianópolis, Santa Catarina. In this article, we selected data from three schools and the Youth and Adult Education center. The research included classroom observations, questionnaires administered to students and interviews with teachers and school leaders. Regarding the questionnaires, the analysis comprised 162 from the later years of primary education, answered by students from three 8th year classes and three 9th year classes, from the morning and afternoon shifts, covering the age range between 12 and 15 years; 362 questionnaires were administered in upper secondary education, applied in two schools and encompassing one class from each year (1st, 2nd, and 3rd year) in the morning, afternoon, and evening shifts, covering an age range between 15 and 19 years; and 42 questionnaires were administered in Youth and Adult Education, answered by students in the second segment (corresponding to the final years of elementary school), predominantly aged between 15 and 17 years, but covering an age range up to 25 years old. Concerning the interviews, 25 were conducted with teachers working in classrooms or holding management positions.

Based on the assumption that we are experiencing a process of the precarization of working-class living conditions (Antunes 2018), particularly in countries such as Brazil, which occupy a peripheral position in the global labor market, we present some elements that indicate the living conditions of students attending state schools. We begin with an overview of social inequality in Brazil [tab. 1].

Table 1 Data on social inequality in Brazil

Population	203,080,756
Labor Force	140.8 million
Overall Unemployment	9.3%
Poverty ¹ and Risk of Poverty	53.4%
Inequality (Gini)	0.518
Education (Average years of schooling)	9.9
Racial and Gender Inequality	70%

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the Demographic Census, IBGE 2023

¹ The IBGE adopted the World Bank's monetary poverty thresholds, defining extreme poverty as US\$ 2.15 per person per day and poverty as US\$ 6.85 per person per day.

Data from the 2022 Demographic Census (IBGE 2023) provide an important, though not comprehensive, update on social inequality in Brazil, reinforcing the fact that poverty and inequality continue to have clearly defined class, racial, and gender dimensions. In our research, students' household income ranges between one and four minimum wages, with each family comprising, on average, three to four people living in the same household. In line with the poverty data reported by IBGE, the results from our sample indicate that 53% of students and their families were living in extreme poverty or at the poverty line in 2024, constituting a first and fundamental condition from which children and young people study in Brazil.

Another piece of data from Table 1 that helps to highlight educational inequalities concerns the average number of years of schooling of the Brazilian population: 9.9 years. This figure contrasts with the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law, which establishes 14 years of compulsory schooling, corresponding to ages 4 to 17. Therefore, it can be stated that living conditions influence the type of access to education, school retention, and educational development to which each individual is subjected, as well as their position in the world of work in the production and reproduction of their existence and in the maintenance of the capitalist system.

Current educational policies deepen school inequalities and educational duality, as differences in access, retention, and living conditions further segregate and/or exclude large segments of the population. Perocco (2012) states that educational inequality is directly linked to social class, ethnicity, and place of origin. These multiple inequalities make life precarious, marked by stigma and discrimination, and undermine and diminish opportunities for human development. In Brazil, we also identify this accumulation of inequalities, indicating that it is structural to capitalist society,

encompassing social, labor, income, housing, mobility, health, cultural, leisure, and educational dimensions.

3.1 The Social Reproduction of Students and Their Families

Who are the students who attend state schools in Brazil? What are the living and working conditions of their families like, and how do these conditions affect access to schooling, school retention, and learning? Given the specific context under investigation – three state schools and one Youth and Adult Education center in the municipality of Florianópolis – we analyze a set of data that enables us to address the questions outlined above.

Regarding place of birth, there has been a growth in the enrollment of immigrant students in schools, mainly from Venezuela, Haiti, and Bolivia. The number of enrollments of international immigrants increased from 41,916 in 2010 to 122,900 in 2022, especially in primary education and early childhood education.² Concerning internal migration within Brazil, there are greater difficulties in mapping enrollments. Nevertheless, the data reveal longstanding regional inequalities in the country, between rural and urban areas, as well as the intense mobility of workers, most of whom are in temporary employment.

According to the data collected in our research, in the later years³ of primary education, only 27% of students were born in Florianópolis; among their family members, this figure is 28.6%. In Youth and Adult Education,⁴ 27% of students were born in Florianópolis, as were 19% of their family members. In upper secondary education,⁵ 56% of students are immigrants or children of immigrants, 33% are locally born but children of immigrants, and only 7% were born in the municipality, as were their parents.⁶

These data, allows us to draw some considerations and syntheses. The presence of immigrant students in schools has become a structural issue. Migration is increasingly temporary due to barriers

2 The IBGE adopted the World Bank's monetary poverty thresholds, defining extreme poverty as US\$ 2.15 per person per day and poverty as US\$ 6.85 per person per day.

3 In 2022, Brazil's Gini index was 0.518, indicating that the richest 1% of the population controlled nearly 20% of the nation's total income, whereas the poorest 50% accounted for only about 10%.

4 Black and mixed-race women comprise the most vulnerable group, representing 41.3%.

5 Panorama of Work in Brazil and Florianópolis (2023). Centre for the Study of Transformations in the World of Work - TMT/CED/UFSC.

6 The sample comprised 162 questionnaires administered to students in the 8th and 9th years at a state school.

to long-term settlement, whereby children and young people often experience multiple relocations and school trajectories. Emigration and immigration, in turn, represent two dimensions of the same reality; according to Sayad (2008), both express processes of expropriation and exploitation

Regarding the ethno-racial marker of identification among students, the educational modality with the highest proportion of Black students – 64%, according to our research – is Youth and Adult Education, which concentrates the largest share of students who are precarious workers, immigrants, and in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability. In the later years of primary education, 45% of students self-identified as Black, while in upper secondary education, this figure was 33%. It is noteworthy that many students reported that they “did not know” how to answer this question, which may indicate a historical process of concealment of self-identification with a “non-white” identity.

Concerning work, 56% of mothers are engaged in activities such as domestic work or work as cleaners, while 42% of fathers are employed in the construction sector (bricklayers, laborers, assistants) or in other temporary or informal jobs, many of which are influenced by the tourist season in Florianópolis. These occupations reflect the reality of a large portion of the region’s working population, marked by low wages, employment instability, and, in many cases, the absence of labor rights. The high proportion of students – approximately 23% – who were unable to report their parents’ occupation or income may also indicate temporary or informal employment or the absence of a stable income. We observed differences in types of work by gender, whereby mothers more frequently engaged in cleaning and domestic services, and fathers worked in sectors such as construction and transport, particularly through digital platforms and without formal employment ties.⁷ This division of labor also reflects longstanding social and gender inequalities in our society.

The results of the questionnaires administered to students and their families, together with the interviews conducted with teachers, reveal that state schools in Brazil, especially in the most peripheral and impoverished neighborhoods, concentrate students whose families are engaged in low-skilled occupations, with low wages, long working hours, and a high degree of instability and insecurity. We may refer to this population, in Marx’s terms, as relatively superfluous: those in completely irregular employment, constituting an inexhaustible source of available labor power. Their defining

7 The sample comprised 42 questionnaires administered to students in the second segment (6th to 9th years) of an Adult and Youth Education program.

characteristics are “maximum of working time, and minimum of wages” (Marx 2017, 718).

The form of “piece-rate wages”, present at the early stages of the capitalist mode of production, has become increasingly entrenched in contemporary labor relations (for example, app-based delivery workers and drivers), and is also evident in the families of the students surveyed. This type of wage is measured by the “quantity of products in which the labor has embodied itself during a given time” (Marx 2017, 623), which leads workers to expend their labor power as intensively as possible.

Regarding the extension of working hours, this is observed among the students’ parents; in the case of mothers, this is compounded by domestic labor. This situation is also evident among adolescents and young people themselves, contributing to school dropout, and to the need to attend evening classes or Youth and Adult Education programs. We observed that students are engaged in domestic activities: more than 50% of respondents in the later years of primary education (aged 13 to 14) and 90% of upper secondary students reported such involvement. Among the latter, 32% work in paid employment and assume some level of financial responsibility for their families.

Among teachers, the situation is no different. According to our research, they are overloaded with teaching duties, often responsible for multiple classes and hundreds of students. Some are required to commute to other schools or even take up employment in sectors outside education.

In *Modern Times, Ancient Hours*, Basso analyzes the causes and consequences for workers of the extension of working hours, the return to the past, to older forms of labor, together with the maximum intensification of working time, which means the “complete ‘availability’ of waged workers’ lifetime to employers, rendering the boundaries between working time and overall lifetime increasingly uncertain” (Basso 2018, 17, Authors’ transl.).

As a result, students have little time for other activities or for social interaction related to sport, culture, and leisure. Participation in associations, social movements, and youth groups is limited, with the highest levels of involvement occurring within religious institutions. The landscapes of these areas are neglected, including schools, parks, playgrounds, football pitches, and green spaces. Children and young people bear the brunt of many of the changes brought about by public disinvestment in education, social assistance, housing, healthcare, and public spaces.

According to the 2022 Demographic Census (IBGE), over the past 12 years, the municipality of Florianópolis has experienced a population increase of 31.27%. In the northern region of the city, where the Youth and Adult Education center and two schools included in our field research are located, this increase reached 61%. The

problem is that, by and large, population growth has not been accompanied by public policies, such as providing schools, health centers, sanitation, and urban infrastructure. Consequently, schools are subject to waiting lists and overcrowded classrooms; parents are often unable to secure places in schools in the neighborhoods where they live; queues for healthcare services are extremely long; the lack of sanitation and the disorderly expansion driven by real estate speculation have led to urban pollution; and public transport is expensive and operates on limited schedules.

In relation to working-class housing conditions, IBGE data from 2022 indicate that 20.2% of the Brazilian population lives in rented accommodation and 8.8% in dwellings provided free of charge. In the municipality of Florianópolis, the proportion of people living in rented housing reaches 28.3%.⁸ In addition, IBGE estimates that 28.9% of the metropolitan population lives in rented properties whose cost is high in relation to their respective household incomes.

3.2 Teaching and Pedagogical Organization in Schools

The social reality experienced by students outside school does not disappear when they enter the educational institution; rather, it permeates it. It is the same individual, in their entirety, who becomes a student. Faced with this complex reality, particularly in a country such as Brazil, schools and education systems oscillate between disregarding students' living conditions, whether due to ignorance or powerlessness, and adapting schools and educational policies to the students' profiles. However, schools also produce specific conditions that shape children's and young people's relationship with study, materialized in the logic of the organization of pedagogical work and in teachers' working conditions. In this section, we aim to highlight what these pedagogical conditions are and how they function in determining students' relationship with learning knowledge.

As an initial synthesis, we understand that the social function of the school remains essentially the same, but there are ongoing changes that both intensify it and signal the possibility of a real, rather than merely formal, subsumption of pedagogical labor to capital. To support this position, we analyze some expressions of how the organization of pedagogical work has been carried out in the state schools investigated.

We understand that the organization of schoolwork is directly related to the social functioning of the school. Teaching how to

⁸ The sample comprised 362 questionnaires administered to students from two state schools.

think, providing access to critical formation, and to the foundations of the sciences remain accessible only to a segment of the ruling class; the duality of schooling persists. Thus, we find Manacorda's (2000) expression appropriate, insofar as one of the school's roles is to convey the 'rudiments' of human knowledge.

In Brazil, 80% of children and young people are enrolled in state schools (Brazil 2025). However, if we consider that a significant share of enrollment in the private sector consists of children and young people who do not form, and are unlikely to form, the ranks of the ruling class, it can be argued that Brazilian schooling has historically fulfilled the role of socializing the majority of the population into elementary and fragmented forms of knowledge - necessary and appropriate to the formation of labor power under capitalism.

This characterization of the social function of the school is essential to explaining why, even more than 25 years after compulsory basic education from the 1st to the 9th year was established, we still face a situation in which teachers understand that

The best technology a school can offer is seeing that, after nine years, students can read, understand what they read, and write fluently. (Teacher A)

The expansion of schooling in Brazil has taken place through a process that further marginalizes school content, marked by its flexibilization, simplification, and fragmentation.

The current school structure, which maintains the logic of organizing subjects within a fixed timetable and allocating limited time to each subject (sometimes one or two lessons per week; 50-minute classes), tends to prevent a pedagogical relationship that allows for in-depth engagement with knowledge. Moreover, schools and teachers have little or no autonomy to alter this logic.

I always had to come up with something I could start and finish in a single lesson [...] because there was basically no continuity. So, I'd just try to do whatever I could within that time slot, and that was it. In the end, that's kind of how teachers have to organize things, right? (Teacher B)

In an attempt to ensure "intermediate satisfactions" (Snyders 1988) or some sense of continuity, the logic that organizes schoolwork induces teachers to design activities that can be started and completed within the time span of "a single lesson", as reported by the interviewed teacher. This requires simplifying the complexity of knowledge so that it fits within the class period. This organizational logic applies not only to subjects with a teaching load of one or two lessons per week but also to support or substitute teachers, who often enter

the classroom for a single lesson. Thus, while the school ensures continuity in terms of time spent in the classroom, its structure pushes towards discontinuity in relation to systematic engagement with knowledge.

There is an increasing emphasis on a curriculum logic structured around time spent in class, in which priority is given to being physically present at school and in the classroom, fulfilling tasks, assessments, and other requirements. This mode of organizing schoolwork, crystallized in its institutional machinery – textbooks, workbooks, curricula, and processes of platformization – is deliberately shaped by policy and capital, even though it often appears as an individual “choice” made by teachers. It points to a second function of schooling that remains highly relevant: disciplining and massification.

Enguita (1989) analyzes this articulation further between school and bourgeois society, identifying how the mode of organization of the latter induces a corresponding mode of organization within the school, including teaching processes, thereby constructing a school form that reproduces, in its own way, the logic of the broader social order. According to Enguita (1989), the bourgeois school form prioritizes obedience, constant assessment, competition, and hierarchization, while controlling time, space, and activity, thereby limiting students’ participation in both school life and their own learning.

According to the author, and drawing on Marx’s discussion of alienation in labor, in the bourgeois school the student is alienated from the labor process, from the means of labor, and – we would add – from the product of labor, insofar as the possibilities of accessing knowledge that reveals the structures governing the natural and social world are reduced. Davidov (1988) argues that the product of labor at school (the product of study) is the students’ own formation (the knowledge they appropriate). Thus, we can say that our students are indeed alienated: they do not know whether they have learned or what they have learned; they do not know how to organize their own study autonomously; they carry out learning tasks always for others and not to learn something specific. Abstract labor has increasingly become concrete, both in teachers’ work and in students’ study activity.

In the current configuration of the school form, there has been an expansion of large-scale assessments. While they were initially designed to systematize information about education systems and were conducted on a sample basis, from 2005 onwards, they began to be applied on a census basis to all state primary schools. In 2025, in Florianópolis primary schools, a total of 12 tests determined by external assessments were administered. Teachers at one school reported that they spent three months preparing children for a single test, which highlights the conversion of the broader objectives of education into the preparation of students for performance in these

assessments. Hence, teachers perceive that the early years are “overwhelmed by testing” (Teacher C).

Moreover, these assessments determine what will be taught and how it will be taught. In recent years, a growing hegemony of multiple-choice question-and-answer logic can be observed from the very first year of primary education. This logic tends to foster a form of superficial thinking, in which answers must be quick and unambiguous, and learning content becomes synonymous with identifying one option from a list of pre-formulated answers.

Nevertheless, what this type of assessment measures does not correspond to effective learning. “Letting students move up grades has cut down on dropouts, but it still hasn’t made sure they actually learn” (interview, Teacher A). Automatic grade progression means that students continue to follow the school timetable with their cohort, regardless of whether they have learned or acquired the basic knowledge needed to keep up with the group. This logic contributes to study activity appearing to students as something objectively independent of the effective appropriation of concrete knowledge.

Therefore, returning to Enguita’s (1989) ideas, it is false to claim that the social function of the school is primarily to work with knowledge. The school educates through the experience to which it subjects students: exhausting routines; exposure to control and assessment; memorization; and a lack of meaning and motivation for learning – even when it draws on “rudiments of knowledge”.

Discontinuity, as part of the logic of the organization of schoolwork, also manifests itself in the widespread use of teachers on temporary contracts and in the constant inflow and outflow of immigrant students. In the municipal education system of Florianópolis, out of a total of more than 2,050 teachers, around 51% are employed on a temporary basis (Educational Data Platform 2020), contradicting what is permitted by the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDB 9294/1996). This situation hinders the formation of a consistent teaching staff within schools, weakening long-term ties with the school community and, consequently, the development of a coherent pedagogical project.

Thus, the school – similar to bourgeois society – has its social function marked by the separation between knowing and doing: students follow orders and carry out what they are instructed to do, just as teachers increasingly do what is prescribed for them, whether by textbooks or by contemporary teaching platforms. Teachers progressively lose autonomy over the management of pedagogical work and become subject to evaluation, surveillance, and control. As one interviewed teacher reports:

It created loads of extra work [...] opening the system, fixing any problems, clocking in and all that. You're stuck there thinking, right, is my system OK? Has it gone through? Is it up to date or not? [...] The workload has also ramped up [...] Now I have to worry about whether it actually went through, whether it was properly recorded. [...] There's a real mental overload. It's constantly on your mind. (Teacher B)

The deep logic of school organization - graded, hierarchical, with fragmented content detached from life - is often not grasped by teachers and is beyond the reach of their everyday practice. Yet it tends to determine their activity, also appearing to education workers as something naturalized and eternal. As Marx noted (2017, 495),

The machine does not free the labourer from work, but deprives the work of all interest [...]. It is no more the worker who employs the instruments of labour, but the instruments of labour employ the worker.

The remodeling of school machinery, now enhanced by using platforms, subjected to constant assessment and oriented towards the fulfillment of targets, points to a new position for the teacher. Increasingly transformed into an appendage of the machine and subordinated to its dynamics, teaching is shifting from formal to real subsumption. This shift widens the divide between conception and execution in schoolwork and subordinates the concrete aims of teaching to the fulfillment of targets and goals that are ever more quantifiable and detached from students' real development.

4 Final Considerations

The data and reflections presented reveal the limits of the democratization of education in capitalist society. This leads us to reaffirm that the expansion of schooling in Brazil has not ensured the universalization of basic education, either in terms of certification or effective learning, suggesting that the function schools increasingly fulfill under the capitalist mode of production is less the socialization of systematized human knowledge and more the disciplining of students. We therefore conclude that the function fulfilled by the school within the capitalist mode of production is increasingly less that of socializing systematized human knowledge and increasingly one of discipline.

Education directed at the children of the working class - particularly the most impoverished sectors, Black populations, those living in peripheral areas, and immigrants - is directly linked to the current

demands of reproducing the future labor force, which must be educated for flexible production, uncertain, intermittent and insecure work. Subjects must be educated to accept the complete availability of their labor power, anywhere and at any time. A form of education oriented towards resilience and towards recognizing problems as learning opportunities is required, in line with the guidelines of Brazilian educational counter-reforms (Brazil 2017; 2018), focused on the development of socio-emotional skills.

As discussed, school inequalities are the result of social inequalities and, at the same time, reproduce them. Educational duality has historically marked the Brazilian education system and structures the provision of education according to social class. However, considering that free state schooling is an effective instrument for the democratization of education - as it does not select students according to economic, ethical or ideological criteria - it remains necessary to struggle for access, permanence and effective conditions of learning for working-class children and young people. Nevertheless, these possibilities are increasingly limited within a profoundly unequal society that selects according to class, ethno-racial origin and nationality, and in a context of an abundance of labor power and its consequent devaluation. As education does not have the power to create new conditions of human coexistence on its own, overcoming the current social relations of production becomes a necessary requirement.

The social function of the school and its organizational logic cannot be dissociated from the wider society. The school form is determined by the bourgeois social form, and breaking with this logic means transforming society itself. In our analysis, we cannot expect the school to produce equality within an unequal society, just as bourgeois society cannot construct a school that provides genuine theoretical education or omni lateral formation when it needs to train workers adapted to the demands of existing jobs. The task we face today is to transform the school in articulation with a radical transformation of society. Social struggle is profoundly educational for both older and younger generations and stands as an unavoidable condition if we wish to build a school that makes sense and effectively contributes to understanding the world and to becoming, in fact, subjects within it.

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