

Education, pandemic and youth in Brazil



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ABSTRACT

The insertion and maintenance of young Brazilians in the world of work is a great challenge and the lack of access to quality education contributes to adversities for professional qualification and labor occupation, especially in protected, decent and

formal working conditions. The Covid-19 pandemic has intensified the impacts on the lives of young people with the withdrawal from face-to-face school activities, social isolation and limited access to technologies and the internet, which has made it difficult to enter the world of work and led to school dropout, unemployment and inclusion in precarious working relationships. The reflections carried out are based on the understanding of the historical process, crossed by contradictions, in which young people are inserted in the capitalist mode of production. The central objective of this study, supported by bibliographic and documentary research, is to contribute to the debate about the impacts experienced by Brazilian youth in relation to schooling and work in the post-pandemic context and the role of education policy as a democratic and transformative space.

Keywords: Youth, Education, Work, Pandemic.

1 INTRODUCTION

The current political, economic, cultural and sanitary scenario has changed the forms of organization of social life and public policies. Since 2020 the population has suffered from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has had repercussions on the restructuring of all sectors, public and private. Brazilian youth were deeply affected, compromising the prospect of a future with better living conditions, due to the period of isolation, the increase in school dropout, unemployment, precariousness and flexibilization of labor relations.

The professional daily life of the authors is permeated by public policies and programs that seek to guarantee access to social rights, the protagonism of youth, social protection, professionalization, work, autonomy and emancipation of families, which motivated this study, whose central objective, supported by bibliographic and documentary research, based on the understanding of the historical process, is to contribute to the debate about the impacts experienced by Brazilian youth in relation to schooling and work in the post-pandemic context and the role of education policy as a democratic and transformative space.



2 THE FUTURE OF BRAZILIAN YOUTH IN THE POST-PANDEMIC

In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the health pandemic unprecedented due to the uncontrolled spread of the Covid-19 disease in the world. This scenario exacerbated a global crisis, accentuating social inequalities. In Brazil, immersed in a context of structural crisis of capital and increased social disprotections, contradictions of a system in the process of productive restructuring, subordinated to the logic of finance, which intensified expressions of the social issue with the increase of informality and precariousness of labor relations were evidenced. (YAZBEK; BRAVE; SILVA; Martinelli, 2021). They have worsened the living conditions of the most vulnerable, while increasing the concentration of wealth of the richest. There were extreme social, political, economic and cultural impacts, such as food insecurity, unemployment, education deficits, millions of deaths, increased violence and physical and mental health illnesses.

Changes in the world of work occurred amid the processes of productive restructuring and the rise of technological innovations, with "the exponential growth of an era of digital slavery" (ANTUNES, 2020), constituting new work configurations and new professions, which demand and request new professional skills. Unemployment and informality rates have increased, especially among black and brown people and young people (IBGE, 2022). In a society historically awash by discrepancies, especially of class, race and gender, it is evident that the crisis has affected the population in a disparate way, bringing numerous consequences for the living conditions of the working class, especially for the most vulnerable groups.

Brazilian youth were one of the groups most affected by labor issues, such as rising unemployment, precariousness and flexibilization of work. Young people stayed away from face-to-face classes, suddenly needing to acquire skills and access to the tools of the digital world. They lost their jobs and submitted to low wages, precariousness and/or unstable labor relations to ensure their own and their families' livelihoods.

The International Labour Organization found that young people are the first to become unemployed in times of crisis (ILO, 2020) and the ones who have lost their jobs the most since the start of the pandemic in 2020, according to a report on global youth employment trends (ILO, 2022). The level of education reflects directly on employability, increasing or decreasing the possibility of inclusion in the world of work and insertion in jobs with better pay.

However, in May 2023, celetista employment in Brazil expanded, registering a balance of 155,270 jobs, resulting from 2,000,202 admissions and 1,844,932 dismissals, and the age group with the highest balance was 18 to 24 years, with 106,408 posts (CAGED, 2023). Even so, intersectoral articulation is necessary to monitor the maintenance of employment and working conditions, because for capital, young people are often seen as cheap labor, in search of their first job, without experience



From the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 are promulgated the Social Rights, among them, education, which is presented in the first place in Article 6, accompanied by health, food, work, housing, transportation, leisure, security, social security, protection of maternity and childhood and assistance to the destitute (BRASIL, 1988). Other Articles of the Magna Carta deal with national education, its guidelines, competencies of federated entities configuring it as a right of all, aiming at the full development of the person, the possibility of exercising citizenship and qualification for work (CARA; PELLANDA, 2018). The Statute of the Child and Adolescent - ECA (BRASIL, 1990) and the Statute of Youth (BRASIL, 2013) are also legal frameworks regarding the rights of young people.

Youth is permeated by complexities of all kinds, which require intersectoral and multiprofessional attention, through Public Policies. Mostly, the actions aimed at the social protection of this public are related to education and early insertion in the world of work. The ECA and the Youth Statute have specific chapters on professionalization and protection at work. These regulations legally support state protection for young workers, but at the same time, contradictorily, the state enables disprotections, since it has a functioning mechanism that contributes to the maintenance of the reproduction of the system in the logic of capital.

Brazilian education policy, historically, has developed in a critical scenario of dismantling and ineffective investment, which has been aggravated in the pandemic context and suffers from school emptying and the increase in the illiteracy rate. Data released by the Civil Society Organization Todos pela Educação indicate that approximately 54% of public school students arrived in the last year of elementary school with reading difficulties, in addition to another 33% having completed this stage without reading fluently and with spelling difficulties (TODOS PELA EDUCAÇÃO, 2022). Another worrying factor is that the number of Brazilian children and adolescents of compulsory school age outside of school has skyrocketed compared to the period before the pandemic (UNICEF, 2021).

In addition, it is observed the fragility of actions related to ethnic-racial issues in schools and the control of a movement of exclusion of young black and brown people. The survey conducted by the Organization All for Education on ethnic-racial inequalities in enrollment and completion of high school, based on data from 2012 to 2022 from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – IBGE, shows that the rate of young black and brown people who accessed and completed high school is equivalent to a decade of delay, in comparison with indicators of white students ((TODOS PELA EDUCAÇÃO, 2023).

The Single Registry is a system created by the Federal Government and operationalized by the municipalities, which records the information of families, especially those who are in a situation of lack of protection. It is through this registration that families have the possibility to access social programs and benefits. With reference to the month of April/2023, the population between 7 and 34 years old, which includes young Brazilians, was the largest public enrolled in this Registry, as well as



people registered in families with a total monthly income of up to 1 minimum wage, according to the following tables:

Table 1 – Enrolled Single Registry by age group

| | Male | % Male | Female | % Female | Total | % Total Age |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Between 0 and 4 years | 4.057.025 | 51,02% | 3.894.784 | 48,98% | 7.951.809 | 8,42% |
| Between 5 and 6 years | 1.916.858 | 51,12% | 1.833.079 | 48,88% | 3.749.937 | 3,97% |
| Between 7 and 15 years | 8.374.618 | 51,05% | 8.029.407 | 48,95% | 16.404.025 | 17,37% |
| Between 16 and 17 years old | 1.822.343 | 50,69% | 1.772.416 | 49,31% | 3.594.759 | 3,81% |
| Between 18 and 24 years | 4.766.818 | 44,19% | 6.021.268 | 55,81% | 10.788.086 | 11,42% |
| Between 25 and 34 years | 4.673.131 | 35,67% | 8.427.681 | 64,33% | 13.100.812 | 13,87% |
| Between 35 and 39 years | 2.239.529 | 35,32% | 4.100.629 | 64,68% | 6.340.158 | 6,71% |
| Between 40 and 44 years | 2.324.931 | 37,13% | 3.936.764 | 62,87% | 6.261.695 | 6,63% |
| Between 45 and 49 years | 2.132.931 | 39,22% | 3.305.851 | 60,78% | 5.438.782 | 5,76% |
| Between 50 and 54 years | 1.993.979 | 40,93% | 2.877.504 | 59,07% | 4.871.483 | 5,16% |
| Between 55 and 59 years | 1.903.973 | 42,64% | 2.561.700 | 57,36% | 4.465.673 | 4,73% |
| Between 60 and 64 years | 1.634.622 | 44,83% | 2.011.369 | 55,17% | 3.645.991 | 3,86% |
| Older than 65 years | 3.460.052 | 44,24% | 4.360.550 | 55,76% | 7.820.602 | 8,28% |
| Total | 41.300.810 | 43,74% | 53.133.002 | 56,26% | 94.433.812 | 100,00% |

Source: Adapted based on data from the Secretariat of Evaluation, Information Management and Single Registry – SAGICAD, 2023

Table 2 – Number of people in households by income group

| Number of people registered in families with total monthly income | |
|---|------------|
| Up to 1 minimum wage | 79.919.137 |
| Between 1 and 2 minimum wages | 11.152.529 |
| Between 2 and 3 minimum wages | 2.379.065 |
| Greater than 3 minimum wages | 983.810 |

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the Secretariat of Evaluation, Information Management and Single Registry – SAGICAD, 2023.

Since 2022, the country has shown an improvement in unemployment rates compared to 2020 and 2021, but despite this, the data remain worrisome and challenge public policies. Currently, there are 9.4 million unemployed, 3.9 million discouraged (IBGE, 2023a), as well as more than 38 million



informal workers. The figures also point out that the most vulnerable groups, that is, the most affected are women, young people, brown and black.

In 2021, the number of young people who were unemployed and not studying was 12.7 million, corresponding to 25.8% of people aged 15 to 29 years, with 41.9% being black or brown women, 24.3% black or brown men, 20.5% white women and 12.5% white men (IBGE, 2022). In this context, it is possible to verify that the disprotections of youth are deepened, without the possibility of school development and acquisition of qualification and professional experience, compromising or restricting future job prospects. Regional inequalities are also visible, in Maranhão and Alagoas the percentages of young people without job and study opportunities were higher than 36%, while in Santa Catarina it was approximately 12% (IBGE, 2022).

The high rate of youth unemployment also occurs in other Latin American countries. In 2020, considering eight Latin American countries, the unemployment rate among adults was 8.3%, while among young people it was 24.5%, so it is increasingly necessary to expand policies related to the productive inclusion of young people (ECLAC, 2021).

The report "The Future of the World of Work for Brazilian Youth", organized by Itaú education and work (2023) pointed out the reality of young people today through five categories, where most of them are only working or without the opportunity to study and work:

Table 3 – Categories of young people in school-work transition in relation to educational and labor insertion

| Categories | % |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Young people only studying | 15% |
| Studying and working | 14% |
| Just working | 39% |
| Studying and unemployed | 5% |
| No opportunity to study and work | 27% |

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from Itaú: Educação e Trabalho, 2023.

In addition to the impacts related to education and work, other issues affect young people such as mental health, relational conflicts, food insecurity, urban mobility, lack of access to culture, housing, public security and given the plurality that involves this segment it is necessary to implement policies that go beyond those strictly related to the world of work and build integrated actions between policies, that include the participation of the family and the community.

The United Nations - UN established in 2015, through agreement with its Member States, an Agenda from 2016 to 2030, with seventeen objectives and their respective goals to promote economic growth, inclusive and sustainable, with decent jobs for all people. The eighth objective presents, among other goals, the opportunity for full, productive employment and decent work for women, men, young people and people with disabilities. Also, equal pay for work of equivalent value and the substantial



reduction in the proportion of young people without employment, education and training (UNICEF, 2023).

3 THE SCHOOL AS A LOCUS OF DEMOCRACY, TRANSFORMATION AND EMANCIPATION

During the period of the pandemic, the virtual methodology of teaching in Education has expanded due to the impossibility of face-to-face activities. Strategy was initiated in private educational institutions and then expanded to public ones. The effectiveness of this work method was often challenged by the unequal reality among students, because families with greater vulnerabilities did not have equipment and access to the internet.

The school in many situations has a role of reproduction of capitalist forces, being hidden its potential for social transformation. Building a democratic space in the school requires commitment from professionals, students, families and the community. It needs openness to dialogue and reflections from the reality itself, so that the veiled discourses that mask the real intentions that ground and legitimize the hegemonic interests and capital, supported by neoliberalism (MÉSZÁROS, 2008) are overcome. As Freire (1980, p. 35) states, "man becomes the subject of a reflection on his situation, on his concrete environment."

The participation of the subjects can be consolidated in several instances, such as in the school activities themselves, in the councils, meetings of parents and student union, internally and beyond the walls of the school. There is a scenario of dismantling of the financing of politics, in which there are denialist discourses in relation to science, violent attacks on teachers, the attempt to criminalize them, difficulties of the reform of high school, commodification and militarization of education.

In the process of socio-historical evolution of education in Brazil, the authoritarian political culture was preserved (ALMEIDA, 2003). It is necessary mobilization and resistance to fight for social rights, for the right to a quality education, public and free, accessible to the entire population, so that it enables the new generations to appropriate the theoretical and practical instruments that encourage their active and critical participation in the struggle for the transformation of today's society, for a real democratization, in search of putting education at the service of full human emancipation (SAVIANI, 2017).

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The world of work has been undergoing significant changes, with the emergence of new work modalities and new professions that require professionals with differentiated skills. Unemployment, lack of professional experience and access to education expel young people from the world of work,



especially those who are in greater social vulnerability, contributing to the increase in social inequalities.

The living conditions of Brazilian youth have been affected by the harmful effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, be they social, sanitary, cultural and economic. Access to education, which should have as its objective the formation and development of young protagonists, with critical thoughts, with discovered and enhanced skills, was led to an emptying of the school environment and delay in the teaching-learning process, mainly due to the long period of withdrawal from face-to-face school activities and restricted access to technological and internet tools for remote monitoring.

Recent years have been marked by scant investments in education and significant cuts in the Ministry of Education - MEC and Ministry of Science and Technology - MCT. The expectation is that the current government will adopt measures that overcome the serious consequences that the pandemic has caused and the structural chasms that accompany Brazilian education. There is the perspective of recomposition of investments and transfers, restructuring of Ministries and encouragement of social participation through councils, committees and commissions.

Brazilian youth are hopeless about their future in the face of the lack of protection experienced and need the construction and strengthening of a quality education, anti-racist, that performs intersectoral affirmative actions to reduce school dropout, has technological infrastructure that ensures access to equipment and internet for teachers and students, is a proponent of integration with professional and technological education, and assertive inclusion policies in universities. The school must be a democratic space, of welcoming, reflection, stimulating criticality, resistance and struggle in search of effective access to rights, essentially the right to education.



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