

SCHOOL DROPOUT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND NEW EDUCATIONAL PROPOSALS

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ABSTRACT

In many rural areas, entire families often engage in hard work over long hours to ensure their livelihood. Especially on small farms, where the technology applied to production is sometimes obsolete, every help in the fulfillment of tasks is valued, including, not infrequently, child labor. This chapter examines the reality of children in rural areas and the factors that lead them to drop out of school, in addition to investigating the perception of families about access to education and the impacts of schooling in adult life. Education, as a fundamental pillar for human and social development, proves to be an essential tool in the search for more dignified and fair living conditions for these communities. However, it is observed that there are few studies and research that address this theme, revealing a significant gap in the available literature. To promote a deeper understanding of the dynamics that influence access to and permanence in school in the countryside, it is essential that there be greater investment in research and debates on the factors that contribute to school dropout in rural areas. This investigation is essential not only to inform more effective public policies, but also to foster educational practices that meet the specific realities and needs of rural communities. The study adopts a descriptive approach, based on reports of experiences of families in the region known as "Córrego da Perdida Grande", located between the municipalities of Tumiritinga and Capitão Andrade, in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil.

Keywords: School dropout. Rural education. Family farming. Social development.

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INTRODUCTION

In many rural areas, entire families often engage in hard work over long hours to ensure their livelihood. Especially on small farms, where the technology applied to production is sometimes obsolete, every help in the fulfillment of tasks is valued, including, not infrequently, child labor. This chapter examines the reality of children in rural areas and the factors that lead them to drop out of school, in addition to investigating the perception of families about access to education and the impacts of schooling in adult life. Education, as a fundamental pillar for human and social development, proves to be an essential tool in the search for more dignified and fair living conditions for these communities. However, it is observed that there are few studies and research that address this theme, revealing a significant gap in the available literature. To promote a deeper understanding of the dynamics that influence access to and permanence in school in the countryside, it is essential that there be greater investment in research and debates on the factors that contribute to school dropout in rural areas. This investigation is essential not only to inform more effective public policies, but also to foster educational practices that meet the specific realities and needs of rural communities. The study adopts a descriptive approach, based on reports of experiences of families in the region known as "Córrego da Perdida Grande", located between the municipalities of Tumiritinga and Capitão Andrade, in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil.

The demand for labor in the field leads children, from an early age, to perform rural tasks, ranging from feeding birds and irrigating gardens to more complex activities, such as milking, cattle management, harvesting and planting. In adolescence, responsibilities increase, prolonging the working day and causing school to be disregarded, since its schedule often coincides with that of essential activities.

According to OLIVEIRA (2008), it is essential to consider the role of the countryside within a vision of territorial development that is differentiated. This allows for the formulation of a rural education that not only asserts democracy, but also empowers individuals to claim their rights and position themselves as protagonists of their own stories. OLIVEIRA thus highlights the importance of integrating local knowledge into educational practices, allowing students to feel valued and connected to their culture. This approach is fundamental for strengthening the identity and autonomy of young people in the countryside. As highlighted by FERNANDES (2018), education is in continuous evolution, becoming one of the areas that have transformed the most over the centuries. The author emphasizes that, as it is a sector in constant change, education adapts to human development, ensuring its relevance. This dynamism allows the adaptation of curricula to local needs, promoting learning that



transcends the classroom and connects to the realities faced by students. Thus, education is configured not only as a path to insertion in the labor market, but also as a path to social empowerment and community transformation. While child-rearing is a priority for many families, it is important to recognize that not everyone shares this view, especially in challenging social contexts that limit access to and appreciation of education. In this context, CARNEIRO (2009) highlights that the advancement of the Brazilian educational system and the associated legislation have made free elementary and secondary education mandatory, configuring schooling as a shared duty between parents and the State. However, this responsibility is not yet reflected in the reality of all students, as many face obstacles in accessing and staying in school. In addition, education in its different stages is often not perceived as a goal by young people, evidencing the complexity of the educational scenario in Brazil.

The Perdida Grande Stream, located in the rural area between the municipalities of Tumiritinga and Capitão Andrade, in Minas Gerais, stands out for the relevance of family farming. This agricultural practice ensures the livelihood of local families and is fundamental to the region's economy. Despite recent innovations, such as the adoption of modern machinery and access to the internet, farmers still face significant challenges, such as scarcity of resources, difficulty accessing appropriate technologies, and lack of appropriate infrastructure. These obstacles impact agricultural production and, consequently, the quality of life of families, reflecting the need for strategies that ensure the sustainability and strengthening of family farming as an essential pillar for the community.

The intersection between the practice of family farming and the recognition of education as a fundamental aspect for the development of families is essential to understand the factors that contribute to school dropout in the region. The need for support in the field often leads families to prioritize work over education, since schooling is often perceived as an activity that does not offer an immediate prospect of improving living conditions. This reality highlights the importance of developing initiatives that integrate education with the needs of the rural community, promoting not only the permanence of young people in school, but also an education that dialogues with their experiences and challenges. By bringing the example of a family in the region, where three sons dropped out of school to help their father in tasks related to field management, and the only daughter, younger, shows complete disinterest in school activities, expressing her desire to leave school, even though she is still in the early years, it is possible to perceive the complexity of the educational situation in rural areas and the influence of the family environment. Furthermore, a significant portion of the families express varied opinions about the



permanence in agricultural activity. Many of them say they never even considered leaving the countryside, feeling deeply rooted in the traditions that shape their lives. On the other hand, there are those who nurture the dream of migrating to the United States, even though they are aware that opportunities there are also restricted to strenuous work activities. On the other hand, there are voices that claim that there is no sense in aiming for change, since their living condition is inherited from their ancestors and is perpetuated through the generations, forming a cycle that began with their parents and grandparents and that, it seems, will continue for many years. This scenario highlights the need for innovative and flexible approaches that integrate education with rural experiences, promoting a more promising future for children and young people.

For SILVA (2020), project pedagogy can be a way to solve the problems faced in rural education that lead to school dropout. In this context, it is essential that education is contextualized, reflecting the reality of rural communities and their specificities. The implementation of educational projects that dialogue with the experiences and challenges of students stimulates the appreciation of knowledge, promoting a learning environment that recognizes the importance of studies. In this way, it is possible to transform the perception of education as an essential tool for improving living conditions in the countryside, contributing to the formation of critical individuals who are aware of their rights.

Therefore, it is imperative that public policies be established that not only recognize, but also encourage contextualized education in rural communities. Project pedagogy, as pointed out by SILVA (2020), emerges not only as a methodology, but as a social commitment that aims to integrate education into the reality experienced by these families. Only through an approach that values and respects reality, experiences and local culture will it be possible to break the cycle of school dropout and promote a future in which rural children and young people can glimpse real possibilities for social ascension, contributing to the construction of a more just and equitable society.



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