


**SCHOOLING OF RURAL WORKERS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR THE GUARANTEE OF RIGHTS TO EDUCATION** <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.033-014>**Alicia Rosalva Barbosa Vieira<sup>1</sup>, Thaísa Angélica Déo da Silva Bereta<sup>2</sup> and Isadora da Rocha Spinola de Mello<sup>3</sup>****ABSTRACT**

Studies state that the need to work is the main reason given by young people aged 14 to 29 to drop out of school. In this way, Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is a teaching modality whose objective is to ensure the educational rights of the population that did not have access to or interrupted their studies before the end of Basic Education. The present research aims to historically understand the challenges and perspectives of rural workers' access to educational programs. First, the literature review was adopted as a method, from 2007 to 2023, on the topic of schooling of rural workers. Two rural workers enrolled in EJA also participated, through a semi-structured interview. The interviewees pointed out that fatigue was the main factor that prevented the continuity of studies, and the EJA teaching modality was beneficial for school education. Brenner and Carrano (2023) highlight that work and school are social spaces and times that, when articulated, produce expectations and make life projects viable, and work should not only be understood as a search for means of subsistence, but also as the search for independence and autonomy on the part of students. There are several challenges in reconciling study and work, raising reflections on the importance of schooling and the contributions of Psychology to the understanding of the psychological processes necessary for the formation of the subject, the educational process and the implementation of educational activities.

**Keywords:** Schooling of Youth and Adults. Rural Workers. Right to Education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Historically, the objective of the 1934 Constitution was to improve the living conditions of the vast majority of Brazilians, creating laws on education, work, health and culture. The right of citizenship of Brazilians was expanded, enabling a large slice of the population, which until then had been marginalized from the political process in Brazil, to participate in this process. The Constitution of 1934 brought, therefore, a perspective of change in the lives of a large part of Brazilians. As a citizen's right and a duty of the State, public school education must be guaranteed through public and free access to elementary and secondary education for all those who have not completed them at the appropriate age. Article 37 recommends Youth and Adult Education (EJA), highlighting that it will be aimed at those who did not have access to or continuity of studies in elementary and secondary education, at the appropriate age. This article is updated by Law 13.632/2018, with the vision of EJA expanded to an instrument of education and lifelong learning (Brasil, 2018).

Article 205 of the Federal Constitution of 1988 also brings references that guide the notion of the right to education, ensuring that education is a right of all and also a duty of the State and the family, and should be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the person, their preparation for the exercise of Citizenship and their qualification for work (Brasil, 2016).

However, in the twentieth century, thinking about rural education, this was not a matter of concern for the State, because the interest in rural education in the country began when illiteracy began to bother the city, in which industrial development and the expansion of commerce and services took rural migrants, in a large portion, illiterate people, for urban spaces. Since then, literacy and schooling in the countryside has become a requirement of the city. For most of Brazil's history, illiteracy was present as an agricultural country, with the majority of the population living in the countryside (Ferraro, 2012).

The school in the countryside took time to be institutionalized, because until the first decades of the twentieth century it was intended only for people who had more financial conditions. The neglect of cultural matrices was demonstrated, in which the focus was only on slave labor. However, in relation to Brazilian school education, it demonstrates a precariousness in the human elements for pedagogical work, inadequate infrastructure and physical spaces, lack of working conditions, including salary, absence of initial and continuing education (Hage, 2009).

These subjects carry a tradition of illiteracy, treated as a social condition, in which men and women identify as their own and individual disabilities, removing the responsibility of the State in distinguishing financial and human resources that ensure the right to



education, also not being seen as a consequence of weaknesses in the organization of society. In a way, meeting the educational needs, the State has been offering literacy and elementary and secondary education programs for the young and adult population of the countryside who do not go to school as children and this offer promises an improvement in life and points to professional perspectives (Pereira, 2007).

Thus, the schooling of rural workers allows us to affirm that the education of young people and adults in the countryside is still carried out with precariousness. Participatory spaces such as associations, unions and, especially, councils have not been effectively incorporated into the universe of these workers to seek solutions or exercise social control over educational policies and programs. Education is treated in a secondary way as a matter of the State, leading to a discrepancy between the discourse and the practical reality, when he states that although rural workers insist on attending education courses in precarious classrooms, where the efforts of teachers from the rural communities themselves are spent so that the teaching-learning process takes place (Pereira, 2007).

Starting from another assumption, the Schooling of Youth and Adults can be a means of contact for these rural workers who do not have access to rural schooling, that is, in the countryside, since they need to go to schools in the cities. Thus, EJA is a teaching modality aimed at guaranteeing the educational rights of this large population that did not have access to or interrupted studies before completing Basic Education. It is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self-education activities in order to obtain newforms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values (Oliveira, 1999).

EJA has been offered since 1970 to young people and adults from 15 years old and is divided into two segments: for the initial and final grades. Thus, the first segment has reading as an educational principle as a methodology, being aimed at literacy, with a pedagogical teacher as responsible (Reibnitz; Melo, 2021).

The EJA system was created to ensure the development of basic education for people over school age. People who enroll in EJA are looking for a different course. Most work, have families or other responsibilities that prevent them from devoting much of their time to school. Usually, class time is the only time they have to study. Consequently, youth and adult education must be designed to adapt to the needs and limitations of this public. Moreover, the tasks that teachers face are not only methodological in nature. Although the contents supplied are the same as those aimed at those who attend education at the appropriate age, the teaching practices cannot be the same, because it is an audience with a lot of cultural baggage and life experience. They are grouped into two very distinct profiles, adolescents and adults, in the same class (Ciampi, 2003).



However, young people from the popular classes face a hard and unprotected struggle that combines work and permanence in school, and it must be said that in this context of growing uncertainties and diminishing margins of predictability for the future, young people who still give up school, but who want jobs protected, not only by the formal contract, but also that it is a fixed job that allows them enough remuneration and free time to reconcile so many tasks (Brenner; Carrano, 2023).

The return to schooling can represent for these young people a unique moment of resumption of the senses, feeding dreams and future projections, as the experience lived in other spaces makes it possible to understand the importance of school. When many of these young people experience obstacles caused by the absence of school credentials, whether in the labor market or social life, the interruption of studies is reviewed and re-entry becomes the alternative (Brenner; Carrano, 2023).

Studies state that the need to work is the main reason given by young people aged 14 to 29 to drop out of school, according to a survey by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). Approximately four out of ten young people who did not complete high school had to leave the classroom to work. The IBGE states that in all, in Brazil, 20.2% of young people between 14 and 29 years old did not complete high school, either because they dropped out of school before the end of this stage, or because they never attended it. This is equivalent to 10.1 million young people. The majority are men (58.3%) and blacks or browns represent 71.7% of all those who were not studying. According to the survey, when asked about the main reason for having dropped out or never attended school, these young people pointed out the need to work as a priority factor, an answer given by 39.1% of the interviewees (IBGE, 2013).

In this way, the role of schools is to form conscious citizens who understand the functioning of the society in which they live and find ways to improve it. Therefore, schools should not only teach students the importance of rules and laws for social coexistence and respect for the rights of others, but also help to build a fairer society, providing students with the tools to assert their rights (Bondioli, 2008).

It is also the school's function to contribute to the integral formation of the student in the most different formative areas: social, academic and professional, helping him to face the challenges of life. Socio-emotional skills are important to form responsible and empathetic adults, who respect others and know how to manage their own emotions (Penteado, 2023). The school, by contributing to the formation of critical thinking, promotes the development of social and emotional skills that are important for coexistence inside and



outside the educational environment, also contributing to the formation of more ethical citizens, who actively contribute to social well-being (Savio, 2013).

Thus, the objectives of this article are to historically understand the challenges and perspectives of rural workers' access to educational programs, to carry out a bibliographic survey on the schooling of rural workers, to conduct interviews with rural workers participating in educational programs for the schooling of young people and adults, as well as to highlight the contributions of Psychology to the education of rural workers, from the organization of educational programs.

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

The present study was submitted to the Human Ethics Committee and received a favorable opinion, under CAAE number 69167923.1.0000.5496. First, the literature review was adopted as a method, from 2007 to 2023, on the topic of schooling of rural workers. The search for the texts was carried out in the BvsPsi, SciELO and Google Scholar databases, based on the keywords: youth and adult education, rural workers, right to education, education in the countryside, schooling of rural workers. A total of 21 articles were found, but after reading, nine were selected, as they are closer to the theme proposed in this study. Bardin's (2011) Content Analysis was used, and the following categories of analysis were established: Youth and Adult Education, Work and Schooling, Future Perspectives, which will be discussed below.

In a second moment, two 35-year-old rural workers who attended EJA in an educational institution in the interior of the State of São Paulo participated in a semi-structured interview. The participants signed the Informed Consent Form. The qualitative approach was carried out through an interview, composed of 16 questions, about the participant's personal data, what motivated them to return to the study, how this process was, the difficulties encountered and the reasons for not continuing the studies at the initial moment of entry into the educational system.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As discussed in the methodology, nine articles were selected, two from 2007, one from 2015, two from 2021, one from 2022 and three articles from 2023, as shown in Table 01.



Table 01 - Articles selected from scientific databases

N o.	Year	Title	Author	Local	Type of study	Outline	Objective
1	2007	Spaces for participation and schooling of rural workers: construction or destitution of the right to education in the countryside?	Pereira, Sônia Barreto	Baturity, CE	Research review and analysis study	Qualitative analysis	To identify the explanatory factors for the persistence of this population in educational processes marked by difficulties and insufficiencies, examining to what extent the right to education has been instituted in the countryside.
2	2007	Truncated trajectories, work and future: outstanding young people in public high school.	Pereira, Sônia Barreto	Rio de Janeiro, RJ	Statistical review study	Quantitative analysis	To understand and understand schooling trajectories and biographical paths of young high school students from public schools who are in a situation of school discrepancy.
3	2015	The training of young people from the countryside and the link between knowledge, work and education: a study of the Colégio Estadual do Campo Iraci Salete Strozak.	Janata, Natacha Eugenia	Rio de Janeiro, RJ	Statistical review study	Quantitative analysis	To highlight the problems about access to knowledge and the relationship between work and education in the training of young people.
4	2021	Research as an educational principle: a work methodology for Youth and Adult Education.	Reibnitz, Cecília de Sousa; Melo, Ana Carolina Staub de	Florianópolis, SC	Review study	Qualitative analysis	To analyze this methodology, adopted by the network since 2001, going through its development, its theoretical references and some reflections on daily school practice.
5	2021	Juvenilization of EJA and the implications in the schooling process.	Souza Filho, Alcides Alves de; Cassol, Atenuza Pires; Amorim, Antonio	Salvador, na Bahia	Review study	Quantitative analysis	Reflect on the reasons that determined the insertion of young people in EJA, specifying the causes and impacts experienced.
6	2022	Proeja students: from denied paths to other possibilities.	Gomes, Maria de Fátima Feitosa Amorim; Freitas, Marinaide Lima de Queiroz; Marinho, Paulo	Alagoas, AL	Review study Experience analysis	Quali-quantitative analysis	To know and understand the demographic, socioeconomic and educational profiles of students of the National Program for the Integration of Professional Education with Basic Education in the Youth and Adult Education Modality (Proeja).
7	2023	Popular education in public schools: an analysis of the origins of the Youth	Serra, Enio.	Rio de Janeiro, RJ	Review Review	Qualitative analysis	To reflect on the historical perspective of Popular Education in Youth and Adult Education in public schools.



		and Adult Education Program of the municipal network of Rio de Janeiro (1985-1996).					
8	2023	Between Work and School: life courses of poor young people.	Brenner, Ana Karina; Carrano, Paulo Cesar Rodrigues	Rio de Janeiro, RJ	Review Review	Qualitative analysis	To analyze the data that are the result of three research methodologies: survey, narrative interviews and photographic devices for the narration of oneself.
9	2023	Work trajectories: precarious jobs and temporary insertions.	Silva, José Humberto da	Salvador, BA	Review Review	Qualitative analysis	To unveil the work paths built by part of the Brazilian working youth, this work intends, through singular trajectories and triangulating together with national databases, to analyze two forms of insertion in work: the first job through the apprenticeship law and the job in the telemarketing sector.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

In the first category, Youth and Adult Education (EJA), we perceive it to be a teaching modality aimed at serving a portion of the population, represented by young people and adults, who are workers and who seek insertion in the teaching-learning process, because they are not able to study at the expected age. Serra (2023) states that the difficulties of implementing EJA pedagogical projects in public schools may originate from the supposed dichotomy between formal and non-formal education, in which despite important advances in some contexts, the difficulties in developing EJA, from the perspective of Popular Education in public schools, continue to be many.

Starting from another assumption, despite the great difficulties encountered, in some regions of Brazil, such as Florianópolis-SC, a different methodology called research as an educational principle was implemented, in which the focus of the classes is to develop research by the students, with the teachers acting as mediators and proposing interventions for the class. This methodology emerged through the perception of the great demand for EJA as opposed to a small portion of the population it reaches, aiming to be as diverse as possible (Reibnitz; Melo, 2021).

In the second category, which comprises Work and School, it is possible to understand that when analyzing the conformation of the labor market at the end of the first decade, a drop in the unemployment rate can be perceived. According to Silva (2023), the labor market does not homogeneously affect all youth, nor the Brazilian working youth, in



which geographic territory, social class, sex, color/race are factors that lead to this inequality.

However, it is not uncommon for these same young people to be held responsible for their choices made in frameworks that combine structural inequalities, economic crises, and social and cultural restrictions inherited by the cycle of family poverty (Brenner; Carrano, 2023), and in the face of this biographical model, young people in a risk society need to be active subjects in the construction of biographies in productive conditions for the realization of their choices (Beck, 2010 apud Brenner; Carrano, 2023). It is understood that associating work and education brings formative elements to the understanding of the historical form that we live under human alienation (Freitas, 2011 apud Janata 2015).

In the third category, Future Perspectives, Panno and Machado (2014) argue that through their decisions, individuals aim to pursue their pre-established goals, as well as to have pleasant working conditions. Although the incentives given to their permanence in rural areas are increasing, they are still unattractive in the midst of the opportunities offered outside it, for example by urban areas. Schooling brings the prospect of an improvement in income, social ascension, professional recognition and the conquest of an increasingly competitive space in the labor market (Panno; Machado, 2014).

During the interviews, the participants reported the difficulty of reconciling work in the field and studies, since the demand for service was exhausting to the point of giving up their desire to complete schooling, resulting in the abandonment of school for an indefinite period. In relation to these statements, Carrano, Marinho, Oliveira (2015), present that many of the social and individual characteristics have acquired meaning in the relationship with the existential challenges in the social context that surrounds the individual, and the case of young people out of the enrolled grade can be cited, reconciling the dual condition of student and worker, being a decisive factor in the challenge of schooling. The authors point out that this challenge can be aggravated by the reality of schools that seem to ignore that part of their students are already workers or are looking for work.

It is noticed that some questions related to returning to studies after a period refer to the search for a better job, as they would only be able to achieve this goal when they finish their studies. However, EJA is one of the only resources that they could use. Therefore, the interviewees refer to EJA as an important factor in their lives.

However, there is a great demand for EJA in the country, in contrast to the small population that this modality reaches, making it difficult to meet the needs of the population, which are diversified and it would not be possible to imagine the application of a formula on





a large scale. Its function is to repair the paths not taken in the regular time of elementary and high school (Reibnitz; Melo, 2021).

In the history of EJA, the focus of this modality is configured as a reparative action, of the right to equitable and quality education, along with the updating of learning. It is understood that this specific audience comes in search of literacy and schooling in an age group that marks the identification of this group of students (Filho; Cassol; Amorim, 2021). Thus, the impossibility of choice during childhood refers to the alternative of opting for hard work, but which for a period of time makes sense in the subject's life. As we can see in the interviews carried out with two employees who attended high school, through EJA.

Interviewee 01 says that he is 35 years old and single, he states that he has been married for a few years, but that he has never had children and currently lives with his father and aunt. He states that he does not perform a function only at work, because in addition to working driving a sugarcane harvester, he also works driving tractors and other agricultural machinery. These other functions are performed when some workers are off duty or for some reason, the workers needed to be absent from work. The employee says that he had already attended school before, but that for reasons of work and fatigue he had to stop his studies. He states that he worked in the fields with his father, and that the work was heavy and very tiring, to the point that he had no strength or desire to go to school at night. Fomenta who stopped in the 2nd year of high school, then he says that his motivation and desire to return to his studies was specifically to have a vision of the future, such as taking public exams or even attending college.

The interviewee points out that for a long time he had the desire to continue his studies, but that because he worked in new positions and that each week he was in different shifts, this could be jeopardized if he started studying again. She said that initially she did not go back to school, even with the desire, because her routine was still confusing and she first needed to organize herself. She reports that she did not need anyone to talk about this subject, because it was already her own will to return to her studies. He made a first attempt to return to school, having attended for two years, but interrupted his studies again for six months, having returned later to finish. He reports that the time he was away from school was complicated, as he hardly saw any prospects for life, since better jobs depended on complete schooling. It also addresses the hope of entering higher education, as the job in which he is currently finds himself allows for an improvement in the financial situation. He states that if there is a need to change jobs again, the chances of getting a new job are greater due to schooling. He says that this is fundamental in the lives of all



people, because the more you study and even specialize, the opportunities in the job market will increase and this contributes to a financially more peaceful life, as well as to a quality of life.

There is currently a chronic decline in sectors of the labour market that require minimum qualifications. This means that the expectations of the "knowledge society" put more pressure on individuals required to demonstrate certain standards of knowledge and qualifications. For those who do not comply, there are much more serious consequences than in traditional industrial societies. Of course, the logic of exclusion depends on the same mechanism. Social class and gender continue to be determining factors. However, age also plays an increasing role (Souza, 2016). Accompanied by the end of studies, the perspective of the future arises, in which it makes it possible to open doors to the job market with better chances of professional growth. Job search is a situation that not only demonstrates recent changes in the organization of the labor market, but also unveils the function of social relations in modern society (Brandão, 2015).

Employee 02, also 35 years old, is single, but in a stable union for 5 years and father of a 5-year-old daughter. He presents that he works as an Agricultural Machine Operator, working with a tractor in soil preparation for planting, in the cultivation of sugarcane, as well as working with pesticides to improve the quality of production. He points out that he finished his studies through EJA, but that he had interrupted his studies in the 8th grade of Elementary School. He adds that at the time he worked a lot, it was excessive work and that it required a lot of physical strength. He started working at the age of 13 as a bricklayer's servant and in the field harvesting passion fruit and potatoes. He says that the reason for his return to school was because companies require at least complete high school and that he was running out of opportunities in the job market. The initiative to return to studies came from the employee himself, who was interested in growing in his work and would only be able to do so when he had completed his studies. He felt different from his co-workers, because of the little study. Currently, he feels more fulfilled, for changing professions in the company, going from agricultural assistant (he worked exposed to the sun) to control, of a fully automated machine, with air conditioning and a higher salary. The collaborator learned about the EJA program through the internet, and did not know anyone who had already done it, but when he returned to his studies he met many people who were in the same situation. He reinforces that his life has improved a lot, and highlights that these improvements happened through the study. He believes that with this, his career will continue to improve, as well as his professional expectations.



With the participants' speeches, we verified that the need to work is a persistent challenge for young people from more vulnerable economic classes in Brazil (Brenner; Carrano, 2023). Thus, when investigating the meaning attributed to the return to schooling from EJA, we identified that the reconfiguration of life projects and dreams postponed by different circumstances is evident in the participants' speech. Schooling is linked to future projections and reformulations in life projects, bringing meaning to the new search for schooling (Costa, 2011).

Brenner and Carrano (2023) highlight that work and school are social spaces and times that, when articulated, produce expectations and make life projects viable, and work should not only be understood as a search for means of subsistence, but also as the search for independence and autonomy on the part of students.

In view of this perspective presented by the participants, we understand that Psychology plays an important role in education, developing activities that can enable the improvement of teaching and learning processes, creating interventions that allow the overcoming of processes of exclusion, pathology and social stigma. The inclusion of psychologists in schools should be seen as a means of promoting inclusive practices and ensuring the rights and access to schooling for all. Its results also permeate teacher training that addresses the development of human subjectivity, the impact of social relations and its connection with the educational process (Massimi, 1987).

The insertion of psychologists in schools should be seen as an improvement in inclusion practices and as a guarantee of the rights of those involved. Psychology is able to understand the teaching-learning process and its combination with development, based on the reflection of subjectivities, personality in general, conflict, reconciliation and overcoming. Thus, providing categories and theoretical concepts for the understanding of the psychological processes, necessary for the formation of the subject, the educational process and the implementation of educational activities (Massimi, 1987).

The history of School and Educational Psychology in Brazil can be mentioned since colonial times, when concerns with education had at their core compositions about the psychological phenomenon. In the nineteenth century, psychological ideas articulated with education were also produced within other areas of knowledge, although in a more institutionalized way (Massimi, 2001).

To this end, the performance of the educational psychologist must be guided by the mastery of the theoretical framework, as well as specific knowledge in the field of education and other fields of knowledge integrated in the academic environment. The theoretical framework that we defend here is to go beyond the traditional practices of school



psychologists, which are often based on a perspective, not always conscious or assumed, of clinical therapeutic action (Massimi, 1987). On a daily basis, the educational psychologist needs to break with actions that are only based on this clinical practice in the educational context, but that promote the development of students' autonomy, thus contributing to be more active in society and in the relationships established, including promoting the guarantee of the right to education.

## CONCLUSION

In view of the results raised regarding the theme, it can be understood that most of the subjects who drop out of school or did not attend school are to enter the labor market, due to financial needs and their own subsistence. The two employees interviewed present the same reason, saying that they started a heavy work to support themselves and their family. However, it is identified that the return to studies is for the same reason as giving up, to seek better job opportunities, based on greater schooling.

It can be considered that the most vulnerable classes face the challenges of choosing between school and work, due to socioeconomic needs. It is extremely important to increase the education and qualification of the population, in order to reduce educational inequality. The increase in schooling and the expansion of qualifications could contribute to facilitate insertion in the labor market.

In addition to compromising the cognitive, intellectual and cultural development of individuals, school dropout is a direct reflection of the difficulty of insertion in the labor market. People who are unable to finish their studies usually end up occupying informal positions, with lower qualifications and lower remuneration. For the marginalized classes in a society, the difficulties in dedicating themselves to studies prevent these people from getting out of this condition.

When students miss or fail to attend classes, it takes a close look to understand the reasons that keep them away from the classroom. Knowing the reality of students and families, in the place where the school is inserted, is essential for managers to create strategies for students to remain in schooling. It is also important to invest in technology and make the school more attractive to students, with methodologies that respond to their needs and that accompany the new generation. Finally, it is important to develop public policies that not only reduce school dropout, but also minimize the inequalities faced by students/workers.

Some productions in the field of Psychology have fertilized the terrain of the individualization of school performance and social inequalities, developing research and



theoretical explanations that focus on the characterization of disadvantaged groups (Barros, 2005). Thus, Psychology needs to problematize this modeling machinery, which is often the school space, affirming it as a source of knowledge and invention of new subjective forms (Heckert; Barros, 2007).

Rocha (1996, p. 179) points out that "school life can unfold in perspectives that make it leave the condition of user of the instituted paradigms, transforming itself into a factory of knowledge". And this "factory school of knowledge" is there where humans fight, sweat and create, "it is up to give visibility and speakability to these movements that, allied with the invisible, produce objects and subjects that are not modeled" (Oliveira, 2001, p. 237). Change and improvement only start from human potential, each subject must face what he wants, in this sense, the school proposes a process of schooling and the subject's internal movement is equivalent to this continuity (Frigotto, 1998).

From the discussions proposed here, we believe we have fulfilled the objectives of the study, but we defend the need for continuity of research that addresses the challenges and opportunities of rural workers' access to educational programs, with emphasis on Youth and Adult Education (EJA) and the contributions of Psychology to an autonomous human development. in which everyone has the right to access education.



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