

SCHOOL IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC: HELPLESSNESS, HUNGER AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEPRIVATION

A ESCOLA EM TEMPOS DE PANDEMIA: DESAMPARO, FOME E PRIVAÇÃO TECNOLÓGICA

LA ESCUELA EN TIEMPOS DE PANDEMIA: DESAMPARO, HAMBRE Y CARENCIA TECNOLÓGICA

Flávia Gonçalves da SILVA¹
Maria CIAVATTA²

ABSTRACT: This article results from the knowledge of the contingencies that the Brazilian population experiences in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, whose situations of helplessness, hunger and technological deprivation have become more evident. From a methodological point of view, we place the pandemic in the history of the present, that is, in time-space in the events of the period from 2020 to 2021. A historical-qualitative approach was used with participant observation and analysis of legislation. We defend that the distribution of social goods in an egalitarian way collides with the interests of the dominant classes, requiring an urgent change in the way we produce our existence and the meaning of economic and social development. We seek to demonstrate the challenges of the pandemic period in a public school in the State of Rio de Janeiro. In this context, the results point to the worsening of situations of social exclusion and helplessness experienced by students, teachers and managers.

KEYWORDS: Present tense. School. Pandemic. Social differences.

RESUMO: Este artigo resulta do conhecimento das contingências que a população brasileira vivencia em tempos de pandemia da COVID-19, cujas situações de desamparo, fome e privação tecnológica tornaram-se mais evidentes. Do ponto de vista metodológico, situamos a pandemia na história do presente, isto é, no tempo-espaço nos acontecimentos do período de 2020 a 2021. Foi utilizada uma abordagem histórico-qualitativa com observação participante e análise da legislação. Defendemos que a distribuição dos bens sociais de forma igualitária colide com os interesses das classes dominantes, sendo necessária uma mudança urgente na forma como produzimos a nossa existência e o sentido do desenvolvimento econômico e social. Procuramos demonstrar os desafios do período pandêmico em uma escola pública do estado do Rio de Janeiro. Neste contexto, os resultados apontam para o agravamento das situações de exclusão social e de desamparo vivenciadas pelos alunos, professores e gestores.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Tempo presente. Escola. Pandemia. Desigualdades sociais.

¹ Fluminense Federal University (UFF), Niterói – RJ – Brazil. Doctoral student in the Graduate Program in Education. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5249-3001>. E-mail: flaviagsmendes@gmail.com

² Fluminense Federal University (UFF), Niterói – RJ – Brazil. Professor in Work and Education at the Graduate Program in Education. PhD in Education (PUC-Rio). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5854-6063>. E-mail: maria.ciavatta@gmail.com

RESUMEN: Este artículo resulta del conocimiento de las contingencias que vive la población brasileña en tiempos de la pandemia de la COVID 19, cuyas situaciones de desamparo, hambre y carencia tecnológica se han vuelto más evidentes. Desde un punto de vista metodológico, ubicamos la pandemia en la historia del presente, es decir, en el tiempo-espacio en los acontecimientos del período 2020 a 2021. Se utilizó un enfoque histórico-cualitativo con observación participante y análisis de la legislación. Defendemos que la distribución de los bienes sociales de manera igualitaria choca con los intereses de las clases dominantes, exigiendo un cambio urgente en la forma en que producimos nuestra existencia y el sentido del desarrollo económico y social. Buscamos demostrar los desafíos del período de la pandemia en una escuela pública del Estado de Río de Janeiro. En este contexto, los resultados apuntan al recrudecimiento de las situaciones de exclusión social y desamparo que viven estudiantes, docentes y directivos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Tiempo presente. Escuela. Pandemia. Diferencias sociales.

Introduction

This text was written during the research process for the doctoral thesis (SILVA, 2019) on comprehensive high school integrated with professional education, in the public network of the state of Rio de Janeiro³. The dilemmas and transformations in the school routine caused by the Covid-19 pandemic brought new issues to the field of labor-education research, particularly to the conception of integral education and integrated training. To the mediations and contradictions historically present in the formation of the working class, we have added the difficulties generated by the pandemic, including from the point of view of non-consolidated social rights (health, education, housing, food, and others).

We live in the present under the permanent threat of contamination from Covid-19, because of the uncertainty about medical care and the effectiveness of treatments, because of the uneasiness and discouragement that invade the soul in the prolonged social distance. This work was born from the knowledge and closeness with the contingencies that the Brazilian population and humanity as a whole are living in the present. In schools, closeness is part of the structure of relationships between students and teachers, and social distancing with the use of masks was the only effective protective measure until the arrival of vaccines. Legal regulations were issued for the circulation of people, and teachers and students were told by the authorities to stay at home.

³ SILVA, Flávia Gonçalves da, *Ensino Médio Integral e Integrado à Educação Integral Profissional: mediações e contradições na formação da classe trabalhadora*. Project for a doctoral thesis (Education) from the Postgraduate Program in Education at the Fluminense Federal University, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Maria Ciavatta. Niterói: UFF, 2019

Almost immediately, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, the Secretary of Education (SEEDUC) began recruiting teachers for Remote Education and oriented them about the didactic procedures to be followed for the continuity of the students' studies. This paper is the product of participant observation and of the record and analysis of successive reports from elementary school teachers about the conditions of implementation of Remote Learning and the living conditions of the students of the State School "20", in the period from March 13, 2020 to the beginning of October 2021, regarding the conditions and needs of housing and safety, food and access to digital resources for study, in their homes.

From a methodological point of view, we situate the Covid-19 pandemic in the history of the present (BAUMAN, 2007; HOBBSAWN, 1995; NORA, 1984). Regarding human needs, we have by reference their relation to the social structure (MARX, 1980; MÉSZÁROS, 1996). Other sources of consultation and follow-up of the changes in life, which occurred during the Pandemic, are the news of the big press in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. This is a study with a qualitative-historical approach, which seeks to demonstrate the challenges of the pandemic period for students, teachers and managers of a public school in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

In the first section we deal with the history of the present; in the second section we reflect on the capital system, public policies, and social inequalities; in the third section we draw a picture of the conditions of housing, food, security, and access of students to digital technologies and the new attributions of teachers to provide activities in remote teaching; and, finally, our final considerations, followed by the references.

The History of the Present Time

To talk about the Covid-19 pandemic is to talk about the time in which we are living, is to talk about events that we are sharing. In the field of historians, this proximity to the temporal dimension gave rise to the history of the present time, which concerns the conception of past, present and future time and the possibility of knowing each of these temporalities⁴.

A first conception of the present time is the interpretation of history through a factual and immediate reading, time as a permanent present, "presenteeism". The term is seen in a pejorative sense insofar as it deals with phenomena in isolation from their historical context, and leads to an erasure of memory through ignorance of the past. But this conception does not prevail among all recognized historians, for whom the history of the present is a question of a

⁴This introduction continues Ciavatta's oral presentation (2009).

temporality frame, because its requirements are the same as those of every conception of history.

Here we assume this particularity of history as history of the present time, which has several approaches. One of them is presenteeism, conceived in function of the great transformations of the 20th century. It is the reading of Zygmunt Bauman (2007) who deals in his books with *Liquid Love*, *Liquid Life*, *Liquid Modernity*. Thus, he justifies in a folder: "I call the world liquid because, like all liquids, it is never immobilized or keeps its shape for long". (BAUMAN, 2011, p. 2).

In *Liquid Life*, Bauman (2007, our translation) "[...] calls attention to the problems that the current condition of the capitalist system raises in human beings today, between the need to adapt to the destructive-creative rhythm⁵ of the markets and the fear of becoming outdated, becoming expendable." In this world of change at a permanent pace, individual achievements are made and unmade. Which reminds Marx and Engels (1998, p. 8, our translation), in the Manifesto, when he says about the capitalist system: "everything that is solid and stable falls apart in the air."

Another strand of the history of the present is in the studies about youth. The idea of a presentist youth is found in the studies of Italian sociologist Alberto Melucci (1996, p. 4, our translation), when he mentions that "Youth, because of its cultural and biological conditions, is the social group most directly exposed to these dilemmas, the group that makes them visible to society as a whole.

The presentism experienced affects the understanding of time that becomes present, with no memory of the past and no perspective of the future. The acceleration of time by communication technologies (internet and means of transportation) has given a faster pace to the production of goods and the relationships between people.

Except for later researches, Hobsbawn (1995, in Brazil, and 1994, in Europe) would have been the first historian to call attention to the way young people live a kind of continuous present: "Almost all young people today are born into a kind of continuous present, without any organic relationship with the public past of the time in which they live" (HOBSBAWN, 1995, p. 13). In the Preface of the book *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century*, Hobsbawn (1995), gives rise to a reading of the near impossibility of writing a history of the present. His arguments bear the mark of his historical culture, scientific legitimacy, and honesty in identifying the limits of the historian.

⁵Mészáros (1996) calls this phenomenon of the current capitalist world destructive production.

The capital system, public policies and social inequalities

Helplessness, hunger and technological deprivation are not just words, they are products of a social structure, whose human needs are not met through universalized economic and social policies for work, employment, and meeting the life needs of the entire population. Consequently, social inequalities are generated that, in Brazil, have an ancient history, coming from the Colony, remaining in the Empire and continuing in the Republic until our days. The appropriation of the social wealth produced by labor is concentrated and accumulates in the hands of the owners of the means of production, the entrepreneurs, their financial investments, their articulation with international rent-seekers and with the republican powers, at the service of the capitalist system.

Inequalities are visible in the class structure which, in this time of pandemic, hits the poorest people the hardest. Health centers and public hospitals have resources and services that show the lack of effective public policies to face the gravity of the disease. At the other end of the social pyramid, which shapes the Brazilian population, the abundance of private medical services for the high-income classes is visible.

The meaning of Marx's (1980, p. 554, our translation) words that, through work, education and social organization, "produce fully developed human beings" is undone in the mirage of misleading advertisements and the absence of public power. Not everyone is guaranteed the means to meet the basic needs for survival, such as food, drinking water, sanitation, housing, health, education, security, and social security. Other difficulties of the low-income classes are misinformation and lack of critical knowledge and legal support to move through the meanders of social rights, not assured by the public power.

The capital system operates with rigid social controls through economic power, through business-friendly legislation. There is a growing polarization inherent to the global structure of capitalism, the financialization of the economy and our situation as a country dependent on the capital system of developed countries (FERNANDES, 1973; MARINI, 2000; SANTOS, 2000), articulated with the national elites.

It is a development that feeds on the archaic (FRIGOTTO, 2010) and does not contribute to the development of a country that keeps a large portion of the population excluded from basic rights. The Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD Contínua, 2020), of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE in its Portuguese acronym), shows an unemployment rate for people aged 14 or older of 13.3% of the population in the second quarter of 2020.

The distribution of social goods collides with the interests of the national and international bourgeoisie. Thousands of working-class children, youth and adults are relegated to a secondary role in public policies. These issues were clearly evidenced in times of the Covid-19 pandemic. In State School "20", like others in the public network, many children suddenly found themselves without daily food, with their parents unemployed, without internet and digital media to at least continue nourishing their physical bodies and their cognitive development.

The school, as emphasized by Frigotto, Ciavatta, and Ramos (2012, p. 7, our translation), should be understood within the project of society in which we live:

Because the school is an institution produced within certain social relations, this portrait can only be better understood when understood within the specificity of the capitalist project of society that was being built in Brazil: a long process of colonization (economic, political-social and cultural), being the last Western society to proclaim the end of slavery.

In a country with late schooling for the majority of the population, with data on the universalization of primary education dating only from the end of the last century, and still with the challenge of bringing school education to all young people in high school and to those who could not be educated in a supposedly certain time, we find over the school a range of attributions. The responsibility of feeding children, young people and adults is one of them. The National School Feeding Program (PNAE), without a doubt, is one of the most important feeding programs in the world and benefits millions of students in Brazilian education. It is also through the school that one of the main income transfer programs, the Bolsa Família (Family Grant), targets its beneficiaries⁶.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we are faced with some contradictions of this form of social development. With schools closed, the action starts from the social isolation, proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO); hunger started knocking on the door of children in several Brazilian states and cities. The school is again being called upon to take care of a problem that, in essence, is not theirs: the daily nutritional needs of their students and families.

Digital exclusion is another factor that has impacted the exclusion of working-class children and young people from this pandemic context. Public schools were faced with the following situation: some state governments implemented remote education and the harsh reality of the poor was once again evidenced. In the State School "20", few students had access

⁶ Jealous of the political dividends of a program created by the PT governments, and pressured by the country's public accounts, at the service of rent-seeking capital, the Bolsa Família is being restructured by the current government.

to quality digital equipment and internet, which could facilitate the contact between school and family.

The functions of the school and its web of meanings

The fieldwork that forms the basis of this work has as its main reference participant observation, presented by anthropologist Howard Becker (1993, p. 47, our translation):

The participant observer collects data through his participation in the daily life of the group or organization he is studying. He observes the people he is studying to see what situations they normally encounter and how they behave in front of them. He engages in conversation with some or all of the participants in this situation and discovers their interpretations of the events he has observed.

However, given the circumstances of living with the daily problems generated by the Covid-19 pandemic, the unforeseen events generated by reality and the authorities' referrals, we did not carry out the research according to the author's four stages of analysis (BECKER, 1993, p. 49-50). We carried out the work according to the circumstances and the needs of the students, their families and school staff, at school and during visits to the families to deliver baskets of basic food supplies.

Our observation and reflection seeks to evidence the daily life of a school community in the metropolitan region of the state of Rio de Janeiro, hit hard by the consequences of the various crises that plague our country, and that the Covid-19 pandemic has only intensified. We also seek to provoke reflection on the urgent changes that are needed not only for the school, but for Brazilian society as a whole.

The school is located in a poor region far away from the big commercial centers and with drug dealing and violence in conflagration, a reality that can perfectly extend to other schools and regions of our country. The chosen school has an average of 400 students, 35 teachers and three members of the management team.

The Covid-19 world pandemic showed the open wound of social inequality that plagues our country and, more specifically, the reality of the state of Rio de Janeiro. In decree No. 46.970, dated March 13, 2020 (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2020a), Governor Wilson Witzel (currently, punished with the loss of his mandate after impeachment suffered for various improbabilities)⁷,

⁷The observations and analysis reflect situations experienced, in particular, during the period from March 2020 to October 2021.

implemented, initially, a series of measures and, among them, the temporary suspension of classes for 15 days as one of the actions to prevent the contagion of the disease.

But the situation continued for another 15 days and for months at a time, until October 2021, when the SEEDUC resolution (Secretaria de Estado de Educação) n°. 5993, of October 19, 2021 (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2021), determined the total return of students to classroom activities. The problems caused by the closing of the schools soon appeared. Teachers were put on recess for two weeks and students had their mid-year vacation brought forward. During this period of recess, the ideas of a Remote Schooling were generated within the State Government, through the (SEEDUC). And all the education professionals were surprised with this new way of interacting with the students.

The partnership between the State Department of Education and the North American giant Google, through its digital platform Google Classroom, was thus closed on March 18, 2020⁸, widely announced in social networks and media. The teachers received training/training as trainers, from SEEDUC itself and from the Google team.

Teachers, students and managers received a specific e-mail with a login and password to access a school that was transported to the virtual universe. At first, there was much discussion among education professionals, led by the Union of Education Professionals (SEPE in Portuguese), who tried to resist this new measure issued by the official bodies. After all, this measure was not widely debated among education professionals and generated a lot of insecurity among everyone. But the fear of contamination by the new virus and the insecurity about their own job did not allow a greater resistance from teachers to these measures.

Faced with many questionings about the procedures adopted by SEEDUC, in order for education to take place during the social isolation period, the State Public Ministry of Rio de Janeiro (MPRJ) requested clarifications from this State Secretariat (2nd PJTCPEC Official Letter no. 112/2020, of March 19, 2020, Recommendation no. 01/2020)⁹.

In short, the aforementioned letter requested answers from SEEDUC regarding the guarantee of health for students, education professionals, and their families; how the 2020 school year would be fulfilled; how the spaces for discussion were being guaranteed in the various collegiate bodies of the education institutions; information about the possible use of

⁸To check out the complete interview with Rio de Janeiro State Education Secretary Pedro Fernandes, just click on the following link. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=270821307247696>_Access on: 24 July 2020.

⁹ Available at:

https://www.mprj.mp.br/documents/20184/540394/recomendao_covid19_educao__distncia_escolas_estaduais.pdf_Access on: 25 July 2020.

digital platforms and whether access would be guaranteed to students while the social isolation measures lasted; how students with special needs were being cared for. It was also SEEDUC's responsibility to inform if, perhaps, in a return to school, students with special needs would be assisted at their homes; it should inform the Public Ministry of the state of Rio de Janeiro (MPRJ) how the right to school meals would be guaranteed to its students and what resources would be used for this action.

Recommendation no. 01/2020 (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2020b), already mentioned above, goes further and adds the request for clarifications regarding the cost of the agreements between Google and SEEDUC and the amounts already paid. It also demands compliance with the Deliberation of the State Education Council (CEE) No. 376 of March 23, 2020 (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2020c), a document that requires the agency to make public the Pedagogical Action Plan before implementing remote learning. Finally, even in the midst of many court decisions and requests for clarification from civil society, in an autocratic way, SEEDUC started the remote classes on April 6th, 2020.

Teachers and school managers have had to reinvent themselves. We are not just referring here to learning new digital technologies, but to learning a new way of living. These professionals are mothers, fathers, grandparents. Before the social isolation imposed by the new pandemic scenario, they had a support network to develop their work tasks. Their children were in daycare or at school, or even at their grandmothers' homes. These people, at this time, should be protected and kept away from contact with the children under the risk of easy contagion of the disease and serious consequences, such as even death.

The burden was heavier on women teachers and educational professionals, who had to be mothers, wives, professionals, students, and family caretakers. All this at the same time and all the time. But teachers and managers took on the task of developing remote teaching. Far from being unanimous among educators, it was what fit at that difficult and uncertain time for everyone.

As already mentioned, the problems caused by the closing of schools began to emerge. The students, to access this digital platform, Google Classroom, needed digital equipment and broadband internet or a mobile data package that supported the use of the tool. And this was not possible for 70% of the students in this community. Families often had only a cell phone, which often stayed with the student's parent. Those who could still access it were surprised by the theft of Internet cables in the midst of the pandemic, and the percentage dropped even further.

The teachers and managers also had to buy better equipment and increase the speed of their internet networks and/or hire new services, an additional cost for these professionals. One, two or at most three students per day attended classes. For a school that prioritizes young people, the damage is immeasurable. Both the school formation and the human formation, which is formed in other social instances as well, but which cannot do without this space, were compromised.

It was up to the managers to make this school work, helping the students, families and teachers to make things work. Besides weighing on them the administration of the school in the virtual and physical environment, because the school was still in the same place and with its maintenance problems, of bureaucratic order, and with an extra task: helping the families by giving food support to the students who needed it. After all, the school had to be ready and standing for the return to school that could happen at any moment.

The promise of internet provided by the state at no cost to school professionals and students only partially materialized almost a year later, when SEEDUC created the *Applique-se* application and put it into use on March 1st, 2021¹⁰, that functioned with free access to the students and teachers of the network. After many months of social isolation, few students were able to participate in this new way of teaching and learning. The lack of cell phones and computers also contributed to the alienation of the students. The abyss between students from private schools, considered to be of high quality, and students from the state public network, widened even more¹¹. The Brazilian educational duality has been present in a more accentuated way in these pandemic times. Gramsci (2001), in his writings, refers us to the concept of unitary school, a school that serves everyone in the same way, one that is able to unite universal knowledge to technical knowledge. He describes the role of the State, which is to assume the expenses with education that are the responsibility of the family. And only then, with public education, can it reach everyone, regardless of the social classes to which they belong:

The unitary school or school of humanistic formation (this term, "humanism", is understood in a broad sense and not only in the traditional sense), or school of general culture, should assume the task of inserting the young into social activity, after having raised them to a certain degree of maturity and capacity for intellectual and practical creation and to a certain autonomy in orientation and initiative (GRAMSCI, 2001, p. 36, emphasis added, our translation).

¹⁰ Further information about *Applique-se* is available at: <https://www.seeduc.rj.gov.br/applique-se>. Access on: 25 Apr. 2022.

¹¹ "Adolescents from classes A and B study 64% more hours than those from class E, shows a study by FGV Social with data from IBGE. The numbers are from August and the responsible for the research are the economists Marcelo Neri and Manuel Osório". (ALFANO, 2020, p. 17).

Most of the students in this community, in particular, had their learning process interrupted. The lack of basic tools for remote learning and the students' address also made the difference. The solution found by SEEDUC, for the students that did not have access to the digital platform, was the delivery¹², in each of their homes, the Self-Regulated Activities workbooks,¹³ on printed paper.

To make this action happen, a contract was signed with *Correios* (the Brazilian Post Office). *Correios* should deliver to the homes of the students (without internet access) the activities prepared by SEEDUC. But the handouts did not reach all the students. The students who live in areas where violence has broken out did not receive the workbooks in real time, because of threats or interference from local drug dealers. Those who received the materials at home also had a hard time completing the assignments.

Understanding that the teacher is fundamental for meaningful learning, School Education, as a mere transmission of knowledge, became stronger in the state system, despite the efforts of teachers and managers. For students who did not have access to interaction with the teacher, it remained to do the activities alone in their homes, or with the help of family members not always with time or prepared to help their children. Saviani (2019, p. 43, our translation) brings us an important reflection: "Therefore, for the school to exist, the existence of systematized knowledge is not enough. It is necessary to make possible the conditions of its transmission and assimilation".

If it is correct to say that in some schools this remote education reached a larger number of students, it is also correct to say that students far from the city centers and living in poorer regions suffered more from the absence of school, not only as a place to exchange knowledge, but as a place full of meanings.

School feeding, without a doubt, deserves special attention in this report. SEEDUC started distributing food aid to students with greater social vulnerability through the PNAE, which was modified to meet the specificity of the situation, as this excerpt from the Resolution

¹²Faced with SEEDUC's decision to get printed materials to everyone who didn't receive them through *Correios* or who didn't access the online platform, the manager and a female employee went to the community to invite the students to pick up the activities at school and personally distribute some of these materials, and they came across the barricades imposed by the drug traffic as a physical limit to how far the public power could reach. This situation is imposed on the residents of communities, such as this one, that are deflated by trafficking. Parents report that public services do not go beyond the barricades imposed by drug trafficking, and that they gradually lost their addresses and depended more and more on local businesses that voluntarily gave up their establishments to receive packages and mail from local residents.

¹³Activities developed by teachers of the state network in 2013 and that are part of a SEEDUC database.

of the National Fund for Education Development - FNDE, no. 02/2020 (BRAZIL, 2020a) shows.

The situation caused immense concern and suffering to school managers, who were responsible for mapping these students and getting help to them. The option of taking the food to the students' homes, without a doubt, proved to be even more painful. Many students live in places where public power does not reach and the living conditions are very difficult. The barricades that the drug traffic sets up in the streets and that had to be removed and put back in place for the car to reach the students' homes increased the suffering of the employees, managers, and volunteers who were willing to deliver the aid. Those families that did not receive the food at the same time as the others went into despair. It was a sign that hunger was starting to get to the families, and the oral and written reports were terrible.

On May 23, 2020, the Public Defender's Office of the State of Rio de Janeiro forced state and municipal schools to distribute food to all students in their network, through the delivery of food or vouchers or tickets for direct purchase. From this moment on, the regular state resources returned to the school's current accounts and the managers were able to count on all the lunch resources made available to the school in times before the pandemic.

However, a problem became evident: the daily per capita income per student is very low. SEEDUC Resolution No. 5722, of February 18, 2019 (Rio de Janeiro, 2019), establishes the values passed on to part-time schools for the purchase of foodstuffs, which is R\$ 0.62. This value is complemented by the National School Nourishment Program (PNAE in the Portuguese acronym), as the same Resolution informs. In other words, the resources complement each other, but were not sufficient for the distribution of complete food baskets for all, complete in the sense of meeting all the nutritional needs of students.

Resolution no. 06, of May 08, 2020 (PNAE) (BRASIL, 2020b), establishes a daily per capita value for elementary and high school students in the public basic education network of R\$ 0.36. Therefore, schools have less than one real per day. So, what was the solution agreed upon with the courts, in face of the Rio de Janeiro state government's claim of lack of resources to provide all enrolled students with a complete basic food basket?

The managers should make a public consultation to the whole community about the need to receive this food aid. And so, the managers proceeded, even with all the limitations of reaching all the students and families with this survey, for reasons already mentioned here, and that include the lack of technology and internet in many locations or even the physical barriers to reach these families.

Increasingly the school is called to play several social roles, which takes it away from its primary function, education. Algebaille (2009, p. 90) talks about school as an "instrument for the management of poverty", and brings us an important reflection to think about school historically.

The deepening of a historical form of school in which the "school" far exceeds the "educational", subordinating it to other purposes, indicates the need to take the discussion of the relations that produce it, through the reconstitution of some links that effectively avenged in the new context - especially those between the numerous forms of use of the school - becoming the basis of implementation of "adjustments" that would deepen some features and problems constitutive of the Brazilian school (ALGEBAILLE, 2009, p. 89-90, emphasis added, our translation).

Another aspect that was aggravated during the Covid-19 pandemic was that of the school as an instance of social protection. Children and youth were more vulnerable to violence in the community and in home life; they often stayed home alone when their parents got jobs. Some students became involved in drug trafficking. At school, they could count on the teachers, coordinators and managers for support, and a safe place to spend some time of their day.

The number of young people who came to the school looking for documents and declarations to work in poorly paid internships, to supply the needs of their families, also increased, and was another factor that contributed to the decrease in access to the online platform provided by SEEDUC. Especially, the 3rd year high school students, who are the oldest. The students' testimonies are dramatic. The choice between studying and staying alive is not a choice, but an imposition for these students.

The need to work of young people, children of the working class, leads us to insist on the urgency of implementing public policies that attend to this part of the population. There are some keys of analysis, particularly for the 20th and 21st centuries, that help us understand the form of dependent Brazilian development, of an intense expropriation of labor and of the means of living of the population and of an immense concentration of capital in the hands of a few business groups in their interconnection with big international capital. Capitalism, now developed and globalized all over the world, has its own peculiarities and forms of development. Like Marini (2000), Santos (2000) and other social scientists, Fernandes (1973) points out that the type of capitalism that erupted in Latin America was of the dependent type:

This model reproduces the forms of appropriation and expropriation inherent in modern capitalism (at the levels of the circulation of commodities and the organization of production). But it has an additional specific and typical component: the accumulation of capital is institutionalized to promote the

concomitant expansion of the external and internal hegemonic nuclei (that is, the central economies and the dominant social sectors) (FERNANDES, 1973, p. 45, our translation).

Fernandes (1973) goes further in his analysis explaining that this model of capitalism brings with it the appearance of expropriation of the internal sectors by the external sectors, but he points out that, in fact, the countries with dependent capitalism are subject to a permanent extraction of their wealth, but that, in fact, those who really suffer the extraction of wealth are the great mass of wage-earning population. Brazil developed this form of capitalism and did not break the ties that bound it to the archaic, but rather intensified them.

Shiroma, Moraes and Evangelista (2000, p. 9) explain that, in order to analyze public policies, it is necessary "[...] to consider not only the dynamics of capital, its intricacies and articulations, but also the antagonisms and complex social processes that confront it".

The capital system operates with rigid social controls: with the exception of highly qualified workers, necessary for the technical and social organization of companies and financial profitability; minimum wages, enough to guarantee the survival of the labor force and intensification of the exploitation rate; social and digital technologies of manipulation of interests and ideologies to justify the benefits of capital, in the name of economic development, especially consumption under the sign of social status; repression and violence against manifestations of dissent. Mészáros (1987, p. 34-35, our translation) analyzes capital's need for social control: "Now, the fact is that we are faced here with an internal contradiction of a system of production and control: a system that cannot avoid increasing expectations, even in the face of the threat of a complete collapse of its capacity to satisfy them".

The students returned to classes in October 2021, but the social evils that affect, in a priority way, the public-school students, the result of the expropriation that their families suffer permanently, show themselves once again as open wounds. The concern, at this moment, focuses on the school dropout rate. *O Globo*, in the Sunday edition of November 7, 2021, shows the drama experienced by students and families in this return to school, in an article entitled: "The difficult return to school"; the report shows some stories of students from schools in Rio de Janeiro. One of them dropped out of school to work and help support his family, another student got pregnant and, besides dropping out of school, lives without conditions to guarantee her own sustenance and that of her son, others couldn't even keep up with the online classes, due to the lack of a cell phone. The article also shows the efforts of teachers and schools to bring these students back to school, even though they are aware of their harsh living conditions (GALDO; SCHIMIDT, 2021).

Situations like these, pointed out by the press, reinforce the findings of our research of immersion in the reality of a public school in the outskirts of the state of Rio de Janeiro. But they may well highlight the situations experienced by thousands of children and young people spread throughout this huge Brazil, and should be considered in the development of public policies, as well as be part of our efforts as educators for profound changes to be implemented in the way we live in society.

Final remarks

These final considerations seek to highlight the analysis of the main theoretical and practical issues that we face in our research on school education, in our academic-scientific and professional practice. Its time is the present time, of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences in the lives of students and their families, of teachers and managers of a primary and secondary school, in a neighborhood of the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, from March 2020 to October 2021. The work was also developed considering the legal documents and the political directions given by the educational authorities of the state of Rio de Janeiro, in the context of the national directives.

Our assumption is that the analysis of the present time has the same epistemological demands as the analysis of past facts. It demands the location in time-space of the events, the explicitness of the documental sources, the subjects involved and the context of the research object.

We recognize the rapid and extensive diffusion of Covid-19, the acceleration of time by technologies, the search for solutions for school education by remote teaching, in the face of the demands of social distance. We live with the anguish of the unexpected handling of new methodologies and the students' lack of equipment and living conditions (food, housing, internet, computers and/or cell phones) to follow the lessons prepared by the teachers.

Helplessness, hunger and technological deprivation constitute the social totality, "synthesis of multiple determinations" (MARX, 1977, p. 229), with which social subjects make history in these difficult times. These are not just words, they are products of a social structure whose human needs are not met by universalized economic and social policies for work, employment, and meeting the living needs of the entire population.

Through participant observation and our insertion in the local school system, we saw how many children were suddenly left without daily food, with their parents unemployed, without internet and without digital media to at least continue nourishing their physical bodies

and their cognitive development. In this context, the school is increasingly called to play various social roles, which takes it away from its primary function, education.

These facts of daily school life are not acceptable in the face of worsening social inequalities, of the growing polarization that guides the global structure of the capitalist system, in which the interests of the market and the financialization of the economy prevail. Add to this our situation as a country dependent on the developed countries, which are articulated with the interests of the national elites, as Marini (2000), Fernandes (1973), and others have shown.

Given the contradictions between what children and youth need and what the education systems offer them, with the aggravating social and economic restrictions of these pandemic days, it is worth remembering Gramsci's (2011) concept of the unitary school: that the function of the State is to fully assume the expenses with education that are borne by the family and weigh on the families of low-income workers. It is only with public education that one can offer a quality education to all, regardless of the social classes to which they belong.

REFERENCES

- ALFANO, B. Tempo na pandemia de estudo de adolescentes das classes mais altas é 64% maior do que dos pobres. **O Globo**, 2020. Available at: <https://oglobo.globo.com/sociedade/educacao/tempo-na-pandemia-de-estudo-de-adolescentes-das-classes-mais-altas-64-maior-do-que-dos-pobres-24703054>. Access on: 27 July 2021.
- ALGEBAILLE, E. **Escola pública e pobreza no Brasil**. A ampliação para menos. Rio de Janeiro: Lamparina; Faperj, 2009.
- BAUMAN, Z. **Vida líquida**. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2007.
- BAUMAN, Z. Sobre escrever cartas... de um mundo líquido moderno. *In*: BAUMAN, Z. **44 cartas do mundo líquido moderno**. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2011.
- BECKER, H. **Métodos de pesquisa em Ciências Sociais**. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1993.
- BRAZIL. **Resolução n. 02, de 09 de abril de 2020**. Dispõe sobre a execução do Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar – PNAE durante o período de estado de calamidade pública[...]. Brasília, DF: Ministério da Educação, 2020a Available at: <https://www.fnde.gov.br/index.php/aceso-a-informacao/institucional/legislacao/item/13453-resolu%C3%A7%C3%A3o-n%C2%B0-02,-de-09-de-abril-de-2020>. Access on: 12 Mar. 2022.
- BRAZIL. **Resolução n. 06, de 08 de maio de 2020**. Dispõe sobre o atendimento da alimentação escolar aos alunos da educação básica no âmbito do Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar – PNAE. Brasília, DF: MEC; FNDE, 2020b. Available at:

<https://www.fnde.gov.br/index.php/aceso-a-informacao/institucional/legislacao/item/13511-resolu%C3%A7%C3%A3o-n%C2%BA-6,-de-08-de-maio-de-2020>. Access on: 10 Feb. 2022.

CIAVATTA, M. A história do presente - Uma opção teórica marxista para a pesquisa em trabalho e educação? SEMINÁRIO DE PESQUISA DO GRUPO THESE, 9., 2009, Rio de Janeiro. **Anais** [...]. Rio de Janeiro: UFF, UERJ e EPJIV, 2009. No prelo. Available at: <http://www.epsjv.fiocruz.br/sites/default/files/l202.pdf>. Access on: 01 Aug. 2021.

FERNANDES, F. **Capitalismo dependente e classes sociais na América Latina**. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1973.

FRIGOTTO, G. **A produtividade da escola improdutiva: Um reexame das relações entre educação e estrutura econômico-social capitalista**. 9. ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 2010.

FRIGOTTO, G; CIAVATTA, M.; RAMOS, M. (org.). **Ensino Médio Integrado: Concepção e contradições**. 3. ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 2012.

GALDO, R.; SCHIMIDT, S. O difícil retorno à escola: Professores vão às casas de alunos faltosos e criam até grupo de “detetives” para evitar a evasão. **O Globo**, Rio de Janeiro, 2021.

GRAMSCI, A. **Cadernos do Cárcere**. Os intelectuais. O princípio educativo. Jornalismo. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001. v. 2.

HOBBSBAWN, E. **A era dos extremos: O breve século XX**. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995.

MARINI, R. M. **Dialética da dependência**. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2000.

MARX, K. **Contribuição para a crítica da economia política**. Lisboa: Estampa, 1977.

MARX, K. **O capital**. (Crítica da economia política). Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1980.

MARX, K.; ENGELS, F. **Manifesto do Partido Comunista**. São Paulo: Cortez, 1998.

MELUCCI, A. Juventude, tempo e movimentos sociais. **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, v. 4, n. 2, p. 3-14, maio/dez. 1996. Available at: <http://educa.fcc.org.br/pdf/rbedu/n05-06/n05-06a02.pdf>. Access on: 23 May 2021.

MÉSZÁROS, I. **A necessidade de controle social**. São Paulo: Ensaio, 1987.

MÉSZÁROS, I. **Produção destrutiva e Estado capitalista**. 2. ed. São Paulo: Editora Ensaio, 1996.

NORA, P. Entre mémoire et histoire: La problématique des lieux. *In*: NORA, P. **Leslieux de mémoire**: La République. Paris: Gallimard, 1984.

RIO DE JANEIRO. **Decreto n. 46.970, de 13 de março de 2020**. Dispõe sobre medidas temporárias de prevenção ao contágio e de enfrentamento da propagação decorrente do novo coronavírus (Covid-19), do regime de trabalho de servidor público e contratado, e dá outras

providências. Rio de Janeiro: Governo do Estado, 2020a. Available at: <https://pge.rj.gov.br/comum/code/MostrarArquivo.php?C=MTAyMjE%2C>. Access on: 12 Jan. 2022.

RIO DE JANEIRO. **Deliberação CEE n. 376, de 23 de março de 2020**. Orienta as Instituições integrantes do Sistema Estadual de Ensino do Estado do Rio de Janeiro [...]. Rio de Janeiro: Presidência do CEE, 2020c. Available at: http://www.cee.rj.gov.br/deliberacoes/D_2020-376.pdf. Access on: 25 Apr. 2021.

RIO DE JANEIRO. **Recomendação n. 01/2020, de 03 de abril de 2020**. Rio de Janeiro: Ministério Público do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2020b. Available at: http://www.mprj.mp.br/documents/20184/540394/recomendao_covid19_educacao__distncia_escolas_estaduais.pdf. Access on: 25 Apr. 2021.

RIO DE JANEIRO. **Resolução SEEDUC n. 5993, de 19 de outubro de 2021**. Dispõe sobre as diretrizes para o retorno das aulas presenciais no sistema estadual de ensino do Rio de Janeiro, em todas suas etapas e modalidades, e dá outras providências. Rio de Janeiro: Secretário de Estado de Educação, 2021. Available at: <https://ibee.com.br/materia/resolucao-seeduc-5993-de-19-10-2021-dispoe-sobre-as-diretrizes-para-o-retorno-das-aulas-presenciais-no-sistema-estadual-de-ensino-do-rio-de-janeiro-em-todas-suas-etapas-e-modalidades-e-da-outras-p/>. Access on: 12 Feb. 2022.

SANTOS, T. **A teoria da dependência**. Balanço e perspectivas. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2000.

SAVIANI, D. **Pedagogia histórico-crítica, quadragésimo ano: Novas aproximações**. Campinas, SP: Autores Associados, 2019.

SHIROMA, E. O.; MORAES, M. C. M.; EVANGELISTA, O. **Política Educacional**. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A, 2000.

SILVA, F. G. **Ensino Médio Integral e Integrado à Educação Integral Profissional: Mediações e contradições na formação da classe trabalhadora**. 2019. Tese (Doutorado em Educação) – Programa de Pós-graduação em Educação da Universidade Federal Fluminense, sob a orientação da Prof.(a) Dr.(a) Maria Ciavatta. Niterói: UFF, 2019

How to reference this article

SILVA, F. G.; CIAVATTA, M. School in times of pandemic: Helplessness, hunger and technological deprivation. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 17, n. 4, p. 2494-2512, Oct./Dec. 2022. e-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riaee.v17i4.16730>

Submitted: 30/04/2022

Revisions required: 09/07/2022

Approved: 11/10/2022

Published: 30/12/2022

Processing and publication by the Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.

Correction, formatting, standardization and translation.

