

STATE, WORKERS, AND EDUCATIONAL PUBLIC POLICIES: BASIC EDUCATION IN THE STATE OF PARÁ AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF QUALITY <sup>1</sup>

*ESTADO, TRABAJADORES Y POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS EDUCACIONALES: LA EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA EN EL ESTADO DE PARÁ Y LAS CONTRADICCIONES DE LA CALIDAD*

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<sup>1</sup> The present work consubstantiates bibliographical research in favor of doctoral research on the formation of the child social being in the contradiction between capital and labor, focusing on the experience of a quilombola territory in the State of Pará, for which the discussion of the State in the guarantee of rights and the formation of workers are important conditions for the development of the investigation.

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**ABSTRACT:** We problematize the role of the State as a provider of public actions to ensure the permanence of students in public school systems in Pará, considering the social quality as opposed to the quality of assessments promoted by the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB). This is qualitative research, given the interlocution of the reality experienced by workers and the educational context, consisting of a bibliographical study based on Brito, Oliveira, and Silva (2021), dealing with the training of workers and their interfaces with the State; Araújo (2020), Rodrigues (2007) and Dourado (2020) dealing with public policies, regulation and management of education. The results point out that the evaluative constraints arising from the IDEB to measure the quality of basic education are not able to understand the dynamics of the workers' training processes in the Paraense Amazon, nor are they configured as indicators of for public policies in favor of the adequate quality of the training of these subjects.

**KEYWORDS:** Public Policies. Basic Education. Ideb. Public Education System. Quality Education. Workers. Amazon.

**RESUMO:** *Problematizamos o papel do Estado como provedor de ações públicas para a garantia da permanência de estudantes nas redes públicas de ensino do Pará, considerando a qualidade social em oposição à qualidade de avaliações fomentadas pelo Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica (IDEB). Trata-se de pesquisa qualitativa, dada a interlocução da realidade vivida por trabalhadores e o contexto educacional, consistindo em estudo bibliográfico, a partir de Brito, Oliveira e Silva (2021), versando sobre a formação de trabalhadores e suas interfaces com o Estado; Araújo (2020), Rodrigues (2007) e Dourado (2020), tratando de políticas públicas, normatização e gestão da educação. Os resultados apontam que os condicionantes avaliativos, decorrentes do IDEB, para mensurar a qualidade da educação básica, não dão conta de entender a dinâmica dos processos formativos de trabalhadores na Amazônia paraense, tampouco se configuram em indicadores para políticas públicas em prol da efetiva qualidade da formação desses sujeitos.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Políticas Públicas. Educação Básica. Ideb. Sistema Público de Ensino. Qualidade Educacional. Trabalhadores. Amazônia.*

**RESUMEN:** *Problematizamos el papel del Estado como proveedor de acciones públicas para asegurar la permanencia de los estudiantes en las escuelas públicas de Pará, considerando la calidad social frente a la calidad de las evaluaciones promovidas por el Índice de Desarrollo de la Educación Básica (IDEB). Se trata de una investigación cualitativa, dada la interlocución de la realidad experimentada por los trabajadores y el contexto educativo, que consiste en un estudio bibliográfico, de Brito, Oliveira e Silva (2021), que trata sobre la formación de los trabajadores y sus interfaces con el Estado; Araújo (2020), Rodrigues (2007) y Dourado (2020), que tratan sobre políticas públicas, normalización y gestión de la educación. Los resultados implican que las condiciones evaluativas resultantes del IDEB, para medir la calidad de la educación básica, no comprenden la dinámica de los procesos formativos de los trabajadores en la Amazonía de Pará, ni se configuran como indicadores para políticas públicas a favor de la calidad efectiva de la formación de estos sujetos.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Políticas Públicas. Educación básica. Ideb. Sistema Público de Enseño. Calidad Educacional. Trabajadores. Amazonía.*

## Introduction

In this work, we problematize how public policies, as governmental and political actions, integrate the communication between the State and society, fomenting necessary and qualified interventions for the offer of Basic Education for young workers in the State of Pará, in opposition to the quality criteria derived from the IDEB, starting from the assumption that it is not enough to ensure only the access to schooling processes, being necessary to promote physical spaces suitable for training, professionals in sufficient numbers, means of access to school, such as school transportation, for example, and school feeding program, as pointed out by Queiróz, Vale, and Santos (2018).

This is, therefore, an analytical perspective that considers that public policies as governmental and political actions go through the reaffirmation of and commitment to an education based on the guarantee of equality and opportunity for all, which requires the State to fulfill its role as a provider of the necessary conditions for the realization of basic education as a cultural and social good, as highlighted by Araújo (2020).

From the theoretical-methodological point of view, this work is consubstantiated in bibliographical research based on Brito, Oliveira, and Silva (2021), providing discussions about the training of workers and their interfaces with the State, Public Policies, and Basic Education, giving us conditions to discuss the importance of public policies for the maintenance and organization of public educational institutions in the State of Pará, considering the socioeconomic condition of workers who need the public space as a guarantee of primary education as a right, which the State must compulsorily offer.

Theoretically, among other references present in this work, we highlight Araújo (2020), contributing with discussions about the State as a legitimate provider of conditions for the guarantee of social rights, such as education, while Rodrigues (2007) brought us considerations about the socioeconomic profile of the demand of young workers who seek public educational institutions as a space for training. On the other hand, Queiróz, Vale, and Santos (2018) contributed to the discussions about the conditions of public teaching spaces in the State of Pará, emphasizing the precarious conditions in which they find themselves for the provision of basic education in Pará.

With equal importance, we also consulted documents, such as the state law No. 8.846/05/2019 (PARÁ, 2019), which deals with the institution of the state program of school transportation in the state of Pará; the resolution No. 001/2010 (PARÁ, 2010a), which provides for the regulation and consolidation of state and national standards applicable to Basic

Education in the State Teaching System of Pará and, finally, the State Report of the survey teaching work in basic education in Brazil: [Pará], pointing out the needs for urgent reforms and repairs in public school institutions in Pará.

Methodologically, we emphasize that "[...] the importance of bibliographic research is related to the fact of seeking discoveries from knowledge already elaborated and produced" (BRITO; OLIVEIRA; SILVA, 2021, p. 08, our translation), which enabled our discussions around the research problem proposed in this work, as well as in the definition of categories such as public school education, education as a right, public policies and young workers, so that we could analyze the character of public education as a right that should be guaranteed with full working conditions for the Brazilian population, especially for citizens who only have public institutions as a means of access to this social right.

Considering the comprehension of a social phenomenon that presents itself before a reality constituted from relations based on experiences and its contexts, in the case of this study, on public policies, as governmental and political actions in the fomentation of necessary and qualified interventions for the offer of Basic Education for young workers in the State of Pará, our reflections start from a qualitative approach for allowing the researcher, through his actions and observations, to have "[...] an inquiring posture about the research subjects to understand how they experience and understand their contexts and experience (THESING; COSTAS, 2017 p. 1845, our translation), which are determined by the materiality in front of life.

It is the research of qualitative approach, also, for assuming an investigation that approaches its object of study promoting knowledge and information from the reality experienced by people. According to Chizzotti (2010, p. 26, our translation), "[...] qualitative research [...] does not have a single standard because they admit that reality is fluent and contradictory and the processes of investigation depend on the researcher - his conception, his values, his goals". Therefore, ready-made procedures do not characterize qualitative research.

In structural terms, this article presents, besides this introduction, considerations about the youth of Pará and the situation of social inequalities. Next, it discusses the role of the State in terms of guaranteeing public policies destined to promote the offer of basic education with quality, considering the formative spaces. Finally, it goes on to discuss the condition of primary education as a right for young workers who attend public educational institutions, having them as the only space of access to this sound, questioning management actions based on the IDEB, discussing standardized evaluation criteria that are configured in results about the performance

of students in basic education, without considering their life dynamics and the conditions for permanence in the formative processes. Finally, we make our final considerations.

### **The youth of Pará, social inequalities, early work, and forbidden education<sup>4</sup>**

Brazilian youth coming from an economically disadvantaged class have their life trajectory, from a very early age, tied to the labor market, whether formal or informal. Due to the social fragility and poverty that surround their lives, it is not very difficult to choose between working and studying, so when performing some function that brings them subsistence, young people, although they guarantee their livelihood or that of their families, end up also having to leave their studies, as Vendramini *et al.* (2017, p. 2155, our translation) attest: "[...] work is one of the relevant elements that affect and compete with studies and lead to school dropout," resulting in the non-completion of their training cycle and with that their qualification beyond the market, leaving them in the field of informality, of underemployment.

In view of this, we understand that the reality behind the condition of informality becomes an impediment to the enjoyment of rights historically won by the working class, leaving those who live in this dynamic in a situation of constant instability as well as unprotection, resulting from this "quality of employment," a case in which many of our young people from Pará fit. In this perspective, Loureiro *et al.* (2017), considering the year 2014, highlight that 48% of young people from Pará are at the mercy of informality; Pereira and Cabral (2019, p. 95, our translation) point out that:

The increase in the number of people employed without a signed labor card masquerades as a solution to unemployment, hiding the reality of the contingent of workers prevented from receiving any aid provided in the scope of social security, rights such as paid vacations, maternity leave and thirteenth are no longer a reality for many of the informal workers.

According to Loureiro *et al.* (2017), the informality in the employment of the Pará youth force employed without a signed work card is higher than formality; only 45% of young people from Pará have registration in their work cards, while a higher percentage is outside the sphere of security and possibly better income, 48%, a considerably negative fact for the search of social equity in the State of Pará. And yet, the average of young people in informality in Pará is higher than the national average, which corresponds to a percentage of 30%, which can denote "[...] a

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<sup>4</sup> The thesis of an interdicted youth in its conditions to live the training wholly, having the study as a form of work by itself, we abstract from Frigotto (2004).

situation of adversity and a growing need for greater attention from public policies for these individuals" (LOUREIRO *et al.*, 2017, p. 20, our translation).

The sector that most concentrates the informality of young people from Pará is civil construction because it is understood that the requirement of schooling is not a basic requirement, which does not profoundly impact the selectivity of the workforce. And thus, those who do not have complete education or training for a particular activity somehow have greater job opportunities, even with an unattractive salary, so, according to Trindade and Barisão (2019, p. 317, our translation), "On-the-job learning is the keynote of civil construction in Brazil [...]", which means the denial in the process of schooling for young workers.

As for the young people who live off salaries registered in portfolios or contracts, according to Loureiro *et al.* (2017), they are found in the Mineral Extraction Industry, with the great significance of employability "[...] due to the State's vocation for such activity" (LOUREIRO *et al.*, 2017, p. 18, our translation), as well as in the Manufacturing Industry, in the Trade sector, and Public Administration.

Therefore, the reality of those responsible, the family members of these young people who live the relationship with work as a possibility of sustenance, is also marked by low education, resulting from early school leaving caused by the need to work to maintain existence, a fact that also makes informality a conditioning factor in the lives of these people, according to Trindade and Fiel (2019, p. 346, our translation), for whom:

[...] one of the reasons for workers in the informal sector to have low education is linked to the need for early insertion in the labor market, which reduces their study time, culminating in school dropout or discontinuity.

Thus, these family members, through their work activities, guarantee few financial resources to provide the little that is necessary to survive, for example, food, housing, and the payment of electricity and water, which makes it impossible to assist their young people with their needs and aspirations, also implying in the indispensable work of young people, according to Frigotto (2004).

That said, considering this picture of the situation of the youth of Pará, we problematize that the quality of human education precepted by IDEB, focused on a curricular minimization, given the association of school performance to the cognitive achievement of students in Portuguese and Mathematics (ALMEIDA; DALBEN; DE FREITAS, 2013), and, therefore,

denying other formative dimensions, such as identities, relationships with territories<sup>5</sup> and knowledge arising from the immersion of subjects in the worlds of work, beyond the market, does not contemplate the formative experiences lived in the Amazon, It also disregards social inequalities, treating equally what cannot be equal, especially when we understand the subjects of the schooling processes as a youth, in the plural - youth - and not in the singular - "youth" -, within class relations, as stated by Frigotto (2004, p. 181, our translation), for which this category comprises the "[...] unity of the diverse economic, cultural, ethnic, gender, religion, etc."

In this perspective, young people also from the Amazon regions, among which those present in the state of Pará, should be understood as a unit of the diverse, given the innumerable peculiarities of their territories, permeated as much by first order mediations as by the second order mediations of capital (MÉSZÁROS, 2006), suffering, therefore, impacts of the sociabilities of this way of producing existence, in the particularity of being young people of working origin, since, in agreement with Frigotto (2004, p. 181, our translation):

Youth should be understood as a fraction of the working class that has been prevented from experiencing its formative phase with quality due to being subjected from an early age, for structural reasons, to (un)employment or underemployment to contribute to the family income.

We thus assume the youth of the Amazon region of Pará as a fraction of the working class, defined by its class condition, for which the denial of the rights to the results of human work, such as education, sports, and culture, is intensified by having to experience early work, submitting themselves "[... ] to the (un)employment or underemployment, to contribute with the family income", as Frigotto (2004, p. 181) highlights, besides receiving a kind of school with no guarantee of functioning, guided by a market pedagogy, based on a pedagogy of skills and employability, which results in these subjects being blamed for social inequalities, although the reasons are structural, given the unemployment crisis resulting from the interests of the capitalist production mode (FRIGOTTO, 2004).

That said, we understand that, in the context of Pará, the youth, in the plural, should be understood, according to Alves and Araujo (2017), in the diversities of different territories, such

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<sup>5</sup> We understand in this study that Territory is constituted by life experiences based on the relationships established by different social actors and nature emphasizing feelings and constitution of identities representative of a peculiar culture. In this sense, we agree with Boligian; Almeida (2003, p. 241, our translation), pointing out that "Territory is the space of lived experiences, where the relationships between actors, and of these with nature, are relationships permeated by feelings and by the symbolism attributed to places. They are spaces appropriated through practices that guarantee them a certain social/cultural identity".

as those of rivers, as well as the territories of small, medium and large cities, with their peripheries, of peasant worlds, of riverside communities, extractivist, quilombolas, indigenous, fishermen, rural farmers, which result in different rural and urban youth, as well as from ethnic-racial and gender criteria, among other factors within class relations, inferring, from these elements, that these youths in Pará, when considering, for example, categories such as labor market, education, and ethnic-racial relations, tend to have their lives mutilated in rights (FRIGOTTO (2004), as pointed out by Alves and Araujo (2017, p. 162-163, our translation):

Considering the idea of the insertion of the youth of Pará into the job market in a qualified way, data from the IBGE reveals that it happens in a precarious, precocious, and unqualified way. It is observed that 43% of the young people who are out of school assume, as their only perspective, that insertion in the job market is necessary for survival.

It also reveals that only 18% of young people between 18 and 24 study, and 56% develop some paid activity. The situation tends to get worse when we consider the youth from Pará under an ethnic-racial clipping: generally, the data informs that the qualification and schooling conditions of young blacks deepen this precarious condition.

Faced with a picture like the one highlighted by Alves and Araujo (2017), for example, we problematize the inability of only the evaluative perspective propounded by IDEB indicators to be able to define the quality of working class education, provoking more processes of ranking and disqualification of public schools, since it is centered on a standardization of evaluation practices that disregard the diversity of subjects, their social conditions, social inequalities, focusing on pretentiously educational issues, but that maintain the relations of exclusion of young people, not attacking the structures of oppression, as Alves and Soares (2013, p. 190, our emphasis, our translation), for which "[...] schools must be seen by the learning of their students - the expression of the effectiveness of their social function -, **but also by the contextual conditions for obtaining these results**", since, the researchers also highlight, "An educational system can only be said to have quality if its inequalities are also considered in the analysis of its performance", so that "[...] the quality of the school in a single number does not contemplate the unequal conditions among educational establishments".

It is necessary, therefore, to combat the social inequalities to which the youth of the Amazon are subjected, considering Pará, which implies, according to Frigotto (2004), opposing the capitalist mode of production that is dependent on the Brazilian context, disguising these inequalities, when defending for the youth the thesis of employability and early insertion in the labor market, as a condition for improving the quality of life, without opposing the structuring issues of the oppression of Brazilian society.



## **The right to basic education in the State of Pará for those who lack public schools: the condition of physical space**

The public system of education is a primordial condition for the education of the sons and daughters of working men and women who have public educational institutions as the only space to guarantee access to this "subjective public good", as advocated by the Law of Directives and Bases of Education (LDB) nº 9394/96 (BRASIL, 1996) regarding the offer of public education for all. And given this condition, we consider that the State is the most responsible for the provision of education with guaranteed social quality and security for all who need it, as highlighted by Araújo (2020, p. 317, our translation):

The State [...] is responsible for ensuring every citizen, regardless of their place of birth or residence, the right to demand social quality education, and, for this, the State must be organized to fulfill its responsibility.

We understand, however, that it is the State's responsibility, considering the portion of the population that lacks public institutions as promoters of basic education, as a condition of right, to be in constant dialogue with civil society to foster social actions that seek to meet the interests of the various social subjects that make up the scenario of the schooling process in Brazilian public-school education, among which are the workers also integrating this demand.

This is an important management position, especially when we understand that "The demand for public school education has grown significantly and changed qualitatively with the presence of the working classes" (RODRIGUES, 2007, p. 150, our translation), requiring the State inclusive actions regarding attendance of men and women who divide their time with the making of family support and the search for an education that may also be related to the confrontation of the reduction of social inequalities that are so present in our country, as highlights the report of the United Nations Children's Fund - UNICEF (2023, p. 25, our translation),

More than 60% of the 17-year-old population lives in poverty in Brazil. The poverty to which this data refers is more than income deprivation. It is also about access to basic rights such as education, sanitation, water, food, protection against child labor, housing, and information.

That is, poverty, arising from social inequalities produced by the capitalist mode of production, affects a considerable percentage of Brazilians in multiple dimensions, such as social, educational, cultural, economic, and food, depriving children and adolescents of enjoying the results of human work, as highlighted by UNICEF (2023, p. 01, our translation),

considering data from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (Pnad Contínua) of 2019:

In absolute numbers, there were about 32 million children and adolescents in deprivation in the country. To get an idea of the magnitude of this number, it corresponds to a little more than the sum of the total inhabitants of the seven most populous cities in Brazil, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

This social and economic inequality, therefore, is not at all favorable for the enjoyment of rights, such as health, education, food, and housing, for millions of Brazilians who live economically in unfavorable conditions, especially when we understand that a minority enjoy an economic standard that allows them to guarantee all the conditions for a highly comfortable life, while a large portion of children and also young Brazilians, with an age range of approximately 20 years - supposedly of school age -, can't even glimpse the access to basic education, as one of the rights constitutionally guaranteed to all Brazilian citizens, since the situation of extreme poverty in which they find themselves already denounces that many of the rights that the State should guarantee are denied to this significant portion of young workers.

As for the condition, in the schooling process, of individuals who come from an economically unfavorable social environment, the presence of the State as a provider of practical social actions becomes more urgent because the demand for subjects - young people - who live the relationship between work and education precariously is quite significant. In this regard, Guzzo and Filho (2005), in the context of the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century, are quite emphatic when referring to the situation of the working subject in the face of the Brazilian educational scenario.

The school dropout and the age/grade mismatch are directly related to the need to supplement the family income. According to the IBGE (2000), of the 15-year-olds, only 16.53% are in school, while 22% work and study, 8% only study, 7% study and are looking for a job, and 10% do not study (GUZZO; FILHO, 2005, p. 03, our translation).

This finding was also observed by Araujo, Rodrigues, and Alves (2015) in their studies on "[...] high school educational indicators in municipalities of the Brazilian Amazon, observing the variables failure, approval, dropout, and age/grade distortion" (ARAUJO; RODRIGUES; ALVES, 2015, p. 231, our translation), considering data from INEP for the years 2002, 2007, and 2012, with emphasis on rural and urban spaces, concluding that, due to the reality of social inequalities in which "[...] the Amazonian youth is inserted [...]", the evasion or failure several

times in school is "[...] a reflection of the imperative need for subsistence from early work" (ARAÚJO; RODRIGUES; ALVES, 2015, p. 257, our translation).

Araujo, Rodrigues, and Alves (2015, p. 257, our translation) also attested to the provisions of Guzzo and Filho (2005), but in research in the Amazon, on the issue of states such as Amazonas and Pará, the northern region concentrate, on terms of age/series distortion, "[...] the largest distortions, being relevant, in the latter state, the participation of the municipalities of the Marajó region (micro-region of Pará that presents the worst human development indices of the entire state)". For Guzzo and Filho (2005, p. 03, our translation):

Income inequality is also part of the age/grade gap indices. Regions like the North and Northeast (two regions that concentrate the highest number of poor and miserable people in the country) present the highest number of fourteen-year-olds in the school gap situation (89.4% and 89.9%, respectively). Even in the case of those regions considered richer, as is the case of the South and Southeast, the school discrepancy rates are high. These two regions have, for example, 66.1% and 68.0%, respectively, of students at the age of fourteen in a situation of school discrepancy.

Thus, considering this context of profound social inequalities with direct consequences on the educational process, in the formal sense, the present article discusses the movement of public educational policies, which aim to fulfill the right to education of young workers in the Brazilian state, must guarantee not only access opposing the perspective of evaluation of the quality of education for workers based on the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB), for not considering the reality of the living conditions of students in the Amazon context, for example.

We understand that ensuring the permanence of students implies creating conditions for them to complete their studies, year after year, without them having to abandon it because of financial resources for transportation, food, or the poor conservation of the school environment, in terms of physical structure, not being inviting to the presence of the subjects in its premises, making it impossible to have adequate conditions for learning, according to Vasconcelos et al. (2021).

It is about ensuring a study time-space in classrooms, with conditions that allow the subjects both to sit and to feel protected, giving them greater possibilities for learning related to scientific content to happen through the proposition for each stage or grade, thus materializing their promotion to subsequent grades that can also be understood as a condition for the success of these students in their school experiences.

In legal terms, we understand that the right to education for Brazilian citizens - children, youth, and adults - has been proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 10, 1948 (UN, 1948), passing through the Federal Constitution of 1988 (BRASIL, 1988) until reaching the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education nº 9394/96 (BRASIL, 1996), which currently governs and regulates education in the national territory (SILVA; NUNES, 2019).

In these legal frameworks, there is the understanding that education is a subjective right, being the duty of the family and the state, now of the state and the family, to offer this public good to the population, regardless of color, creed, race, and political positioning.

It is also understood that its offer will occur in public and private spaces to guarantee the safety and the promotion of teaching and learning for all who participate and need it, according to LDB nº 9394/96 (BRASIL, 1996). Thus, the public education system enters the scene as a provider of this public good as a social right in a safe and organized environment, which can promote learning satisfactorily, i.e., with guaranteed quality standards (BRASIL, 1996), considering that this standard "[...] changes in time and space, as it is related to the social projects of each time, and adopted by the Brazilian education" (FRANÇA; ALVES; DUARTE, 2022, p. 2708, our translation).

Thus, before the knowledge that basic education is legislated as a subjective public right and its offer must necessarily occur free of charge in public educational institutions, it starts to be configured as a collective interest, considering its representativeness as a cultural heritage that tends to be present before the formation of generations that succeed each other in Brazilian society, being essential, therefore, the performance of the public power for its realization. According to Duarte (2004, p. 115, our translation)

The important thing is to realize that the implementation of an adequate public education system is of interest not only to the direct beneficiaries of the service (students) but to the collectivity since school education constitutes a means of inserting new generations into the cultural heritage accumulated by humanity, giving it continuity.

In the State of Pará, the public education system is no different in terms of interests since the demand seeking public spaces to get a glimpse of training in basic education is quite significant. According to data obtained in the Technical Summary of the State of Pará (BRASIL, 2019), approximately 2.3 million students are occupying educational institutions, which, not infrequently, present unfavorable conditions to welcome part of a collectivity that excels in the continuity of its cultural heritage, as pointed out by data from the 2017 School

Census (BRASIL, 2018). Based on this issue, Queiróz, Vale, and Santos (2018, p. 566, our translation) point out that:

According to the socioeconomic information in SISPAE-2014, the objective conditions of the teaching units aimed at promoting public schooling in the State of Pará are unsatisfactory in ensuring quality in student learning, considering that the environmental conditions of schools reflect fragility concerning hygiene, safety, comfort, accessibility, etc.

In the same line of observation, from the State Report of the research work of teachers in basic education in Brazil: [Pará], in the first decade of the 21st century, it is noted that "[...] a large part of the schools need reforms and repairs in their facilities and many do not have libraries and laboratories" (PARÁ, 2010b, p. 27, our translation). The report is even more emphatic when it points out that

Exactly 816 schools, or 67.11% of the total state establishments, await renovations. The buildings have damaged roofs and walls, bathrooms are closed due to lack of maintenance in the hydraulic system, fans do not work, and the number of desks is not always sufficient (PARÁ, 2010b, p. 30, our translation).

This shows that the condition that is, in terms of physical structure, the provision of essential public education in the state of Pará does not allow those interested in enjoying education with principles based on social quality<sup>6</sup> that is so desired for training committed to the integrity of daughters and sons of the working class that are present in these spaces and that have them as the only condition for the expansion of their cultural heritage.

And yet such a condition is in line with Resolution N° 001/2010 (PARÁ, 2010a, p. 5), which regulates and consolidates the standards applicable to Basic Education in the State of Pará, in Article 8, paragraphs II, stating the condition of the classroom, considering the following record: "offer of classrooms that meet the quality standards of lighting and ventilation established by national agencies for control and sanitary surveillance".

Given this picture, the State, through public actions, should seek to be more active in ensuring appropriate conditions in official educational institutions so that the right to basic education will be experienced by all its users, especially students. Therefore, it is the State's

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<sup>6</sup> Education based on the principles of social quality "[...] is the one that pays attention to a set of elements and socioeconomic and cultural dimensions that surround the way of life and the expectations of families and students about education; that seeks to understand government policies, social and environmental projects in their political sense, aimed at the common good; that strives for adequate funding, for social recognition and appreciation of workers in education; that transforms all physical spaces into a place of meaningful learning and effective democratic experiences" (SILVA, 2009, p. 223, our translation).

duty to ensure "essential inputs for the development of the teaching-learning process" (EYNG; PACIEVITCH, 2015, p. 134, our translation), and to give dignity to the institutional, physical spaces of teaching-learning, in our view, is effective in conditions of meaningful learning and at the same time provides respectful and democratic experiences.

From this perspective, we understand that studying in an environment designed and organized for educational actions is respecting the subjects in their integrity because the feeling of safety, protection, and comfort will be experienced in daily school life, and it becomes an inviting and welcoming space for different ways of thinking, according to Vasconcelos *et al.* (2021).

These conditions can materialize in means to promote the permanence of the workers in their formative processes before the education of quality and with opportunity conditions for all, based on the assumption, according to Gusmão (2013, p. 304, our translation), that "[...] the democratization of education, as well as the improvement of the quality of education, are primarily political processes, broad, in that they are only achievable through public policies".

In this sense, the expansion of public policies reminds us of the unparalleled importance of strengthening public school spaces so that more and more people can consolidate an education that ensures their rights about the teaching and learning process, as well as the well-being of the working class of the State of Pará, opposing the management perspectives focused on quantitative goals defined by international organizations, which seek to look at the subject as a matter for economic and social development, which means, in our view, at least neglecting a set of conditions necessary to ensure the welfare of all as a right to be guaranteed by the State, starting from the assumption, according to Silva (2019, p. 258, our translation), that the "struggle for human rights means seeking a better quality of life for Brazilians."

### **The paths are taken by students from Pará to the public-school system: what the IDEB does not report**

The historically and ideologically constructed nature of the IDEB<sup>7</sup> (Basic Education Development Index) consists of one more propositional action to regulate basic public education in Brazil. As a results-oriented indicator of the quality of education, it is difficult to understand why it should be used as a parameter of information on the quality of Brazilian

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<sup>7</sup> The IDEB is an integral part of the Education Development Plan (PDE) and the All for Education Commitment Goals Plan (Decree No. 6.094/07), being a legal device that puts into action the 28 proposals contained in the PDE, whose main axis is educational quality, as well as social mobilization to achieve the goals set by the plan. (CHIRINÉA; BRANDÃO, 2015, p. 462).

education since it does not seek to promote means of knowing the objective conditions of the existence of students in Brazilian public institutions. Instead, the IBED is based on establishing a standardized ranking of the student's school performance without considering these subjects' socioeconomic and cultural levels.

We understand, therefore, that quality education is not linked to quantitative grades but also includes "living conditions of the population, economic, cultural and social capital of the student's families, the social environment of the school, income distribution, violence, among others" (MACHADO; ALAVARSE; OLIVEIRA, 2015, p. 339, our translation). That is, the subjects in educational institutions are results of extra-school factors as well, which should be a relevant aspect in the constitution of large-scale assessment standards to contribute to improving the working-class training conditions.

Considering that the understanding of quality emphasized by IDEB is measured by a "[...] establishment of rankings with the best and worst results, both of education systems and public and private schools" (CHIRINÉA; BRANDÃO, 2015, p. 462, our translation), and not in the objective life conditions of the subjects that are in the school space, it is evident that the quality thought for education becomes substantiated of an economic vision that seeks to meet what the market needs and also pretentiously aim to remove the responsibility of the State as a provider of means to ensure the quality of education. For Dourado (2020, p. 11-12, our translation),

[...] it is essential not to lose sight of the fact that educational policies, as an expression of the materialization of the action of the State/Government, are mediated by the broader sociocultural context, as well as by regulations, regulations, and dynamics of funding, evaluation, and management, not always limited to the educational dimension, but certainly resulting from macro processes that impact public policies, especially from fiscal adjustment policies, which aim to reduce the role of the State about these policies and their developments.

Knowing, therefore, under what conditions students from the public school system arrive at school, with their diverse socioeconomic conditions and their diverse and important knowledge, could necessarily contribute to the constitution of public policies for the improvement of the quality of life of students and, consequently, their school performance, not minimizing the role of the State in the face of its social responsibilities, especially when we consider, in the context of Pará, that the reality that permeates the life of students in their journeys to school is the most diverse and exhausting, such as the boats full of students heading to the riverside schools and the great distances accomplished on foot in the rural schools, as

well as in the cities, being remarkable factors in the trajectory of these subjects that most of the time arrives to the classroom tired, which can imply moments of wasted learning. In this regard, Pantoja (2019, p. 26, our translation) discerns that:

In addition to the river commute, students travel relevant distances to reach the schools, which usually causes them exhaustion because they do so, as a rule, on foot. As a result, they often arrive at their destination sweaty and tired, a disadvantage even in the initial learning moments.

Therefore, a single standard of evaluation, in the characteristics of the IDEB, makes little sense given the living conditions of basic education students, who, due to the materiality of their lives, are subjected to the daily hardships of being present in public schools. Riverside students, for example, need boats every day to have access to school, "[...] they cross the river, from Monday to Friday, to perform one of the most important activities that exist: studying" (PANTOJA, 2019, p. 25, our translation), and these means of transportation are not always available daily for their transportation, thus causing frequent absences of these students from school, which consequently compromises their learning.

Situations such as lack of payment for transportation hired by the government are also conditions that make it impossible for students to get to school and, consequently, no longer have access to the scientific-school contents worked in the various school subjects. Pantoja (2019, p. 20, our translation) comments that:

[...] when the state government does not pay the boatmen correctly, they go on strikes, which makes the student's learning process unviable since they cannot get to Belém and return to their locations.

Given this situation, we highlight that the guarantee of transportation for students of the public-school network in the state of Pará is instituted in Law n. 8,846, of May 9, 2019, by the State Program of School Transportation in the State of Pará - PETE/PA (PARÁ, 2019, p. 01), when in its first article in line with its first paragraph records that:

Art. 1 It is at this moment instituted the State Program of School Transportation in the State of Pará - PETE/PA, within the scope of the State Department of Education - SEDUC, to guarantee school transportation for students of elementary school, high school, and youth and adult education of the state public network, through financial assistance to municipalities, observing the provisions of this Law. § Paragraph 1 PETE/PA funds may also be transferred to municipalities that can prove they provide school transportation for students enrolled in elementary school, high school, youth, and adult education, living in rural areas of their territory to a state public



school located in another municipality, upon assessment of actual need by SEDUC.

Even though it is guaranteed by law, however, many students end up being unassisted by this primordial service that gives access to public educational institutions, understanding that the lack of school transportation means absence in the classroom, a fact that does not contribute to the "preparation" of these subjects to perform simple to the most complex moment of evaluation.

However, the socioeconomic status of these students is not measured as a constitutive element to evaluate their "good" or "bad" performance in the public-school system in the State of Pará and, consequently, the quality of education, as pointed out by Alves and Soares (2013). No attempt is made to know who they are, where they come from, how they come from, and under what conditions they live. These and other conditions of life could be very relevant elements to consider and evaluate the quality of education for the working class in the Pará Amazon to build public policies that ensure the permanence of young people and adults in their educational processes, with social quality.

In Pará, however, investments in basic education, in terms of high school, for example, have decreased, causing the reduction of real teaching work, the construction of new schools, with food and school transportation for youth, in favor of training through an interactive educational system, making the formation of youth precarious. As Ladislau (2022) points out in his study, from Marajó, about interactive high school education through the Interactive Educational System of the State Government, thus aligning conditions for teacher-student interaction, the spaces for school experience, since the training becomes generalized, from misuse of new educational technologies.

## **Final remarks**

The realities experienced by young Brazilian workers are diverse and adverse, and for many of them, public educational institutions are very representative of their schooling, being configured as the only space that they can use free of charge to guarantee at least the basic education that is prescribed by law as a good to be enjoyed in the national territory by everyone. The right to quality education is also a dimension of citizenship in the face of disparate realities.

However, thinking about the quality of education is to take into consideration not only the means that can develop the cognitive aspect present in the human condition of the subjects,

as it has been pretentiously proposed from IDEB evaluations, but to consider the diversity of contexts in which the school institutions are inserted, as well as to consider the reality of the school community that constitutes them, so that the right to education assists everyone, without distinction of the place they come from or are.

Quality education must also be based on the orientation that for the subjects to develop fully, a series of conditions are required beyond considering the socioeconomic and cultural dimensions of the young people who need public school, even as an opportunity to reduce social inequalities. Thus, it is up to the State to provide public actions that need to materialize in the guarantee of physical space structured to the most salutary means for the access of young people in economically unfavorable conditions, representing 40% of the Brazilian population.

Offering public schools with a sufficient number of desks, guaranteeing ventilated and illuminated classrooms, making libraries with an extensive collection available, and equipping laboratories, are ways to strengthen public institutions and in some way promote a more democratic public education so that a greater number of young workers can feel the pleasure of being in them, to complete their course in basic education, considering that this can come to mitigate the conditioning factors of the social disparities that exist in this segment of the Brazilian population. Therefore, it is necessary that the State, as the provider and maintainer of education as a public and subjective good, feels more responsible for the access, permanence, and success of the subjects that are under its jurisdiction, in the case of our analysis, in the State of Pará, young people, and working adults.

Given the geographical conditions of the young students from Pará, school transportation is also indispensable for them to have frequent access to educational institutions. Therefore, it is a condition that needs great attention, which has not been happening on the part of public policies designed for the quality of education in the State of Pará, as highlighted throughout this work (CARMO; CUNHA; PRAZERES, 2020).

Given this scenario, we understand that quantitative data, through the IDEB, are not representative of assessing the education that is offered in public educational institutions in Pará since it is done in a condition of extreme need favored by insufficient public actions to ensure dignity to student workers, not even in their physical spaces.

The daily lives of students who seek out public educational institutions are marked by a series of violations of their rights, from precarious physical spaces to lack transportation, which is a lived reality that needs to be considered when talking about evaluative standards for the

education of young people who live in unfavorable economic conditions and that makes them not enjoy a full education.

The engagement of the State using public policies needs to happen in symmetry with the expansion of financial investments since the number of resources allocated for such purposes does not seem to be sufficient, according to Monteiro (2021), considering the reality of a State with an estimated population of 8,777,124 (eight million, seven hundred and seventy-seven thousand, one hundred and twenty-four) inhabitants (IBGE, 2021), distributed in its 143 municipalities, with diversity in its territories that are intertwined amid dense forests, rivers (islands), and roads.

No less important is the fact that the precarious formation of young people in the Amazon stems from the way schools are conceived in the capitalist production mode, contributing to its reproduction so that the "[...] educational duality and the obstacles of access and permanence produced by this school have intense repercussions on the poorest population" (ARAÚJO; RODRIGUES; ALVES, 2015, p. 256, our translation).

We consider it of primary importance that investments in socio-educational policies are on the priority agenda of social policies and that these can consider the breadth of this space and its diverse needs, as Monteiro (2021) pointed out. But we also understand that the formation of workers in Pará should consider the reality of work experienced by them, their times-spaces of formation, and their daily knowledge, under penalty of fragmenting and minimizing the formative processes beyond what is foreseen by the IDEB, with evaluations determining methodologies, teaching procedures, pedagogical and management practices disregarding their territories, ways of life, as determining elements of class, as the one we are analyzing, The State has an important role in the configuration of broad and integrating educational policies between school and life, with the guarantee that they can live their childhood, their studies, their community, in opposition to the early work as children, being understood in their formative processes, far beyond the large scale evaluations that parameterize education, under market logic.

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