

What do we know (or not know) about the precarity of teaching work in São Paulo private schools?

O que sabemos (ou não sabemos) sobre a precarização do trabalho docente nas escolas privadas paulistas?

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Abstract

This article investigates profound transformations in the work environment resulting from neoliberalism and productive restructuring, emphasizing technology, deregulation, and flexibilization as their main drivers. These processes redefine social and work organization, impacting various sectors and altering the roles of institutions such as family, the State, and schools. Specifically, public schools face increasing challenges due to the changing roles traditionally played by the State, in a context where the commodification of education gains prominence. This scenario is highlighted by the rise in enrollment at private educational institutions in Brazil, which has led to an expansion of employment opportunities for teachers. Despite this growth, private Basic Education still lacks in-depth investigations and critical analyses. Thus, the central purpose of this article is to examine working conditions in private schools in the state of São Paulo. Results indicated a deterioration in teaching work, evinced by excessive workloads, instability, and the lack of a career plan. It also reveals the undervaluation of teachers in an environment where performance and market-oriented aspects prevail, with many teachers working as hourly-paid employees, without a defined schedule or adequate pay given the demands. Additionally, there is a noticeable fragility in collective relations within schools, affecting teachers' mental health. The culture of performativity overloads and depersonalizes professionals, reducing teacher recognition and autonomy. Also notable is that participation in social movements, such as unions, crucial for labor negotiations in São Paulo's private educational sector, remains low.

Keywords: precarization of teaching work; private basic education; private schools in São Paulo.

Resumo

Este artigo investiga transformações profundas no ambiente laboral decorrentes do neoliberalismo e da reestruturação produtiva, enfatizando a tecnologia, desregulamentação e flexibilização como motores dessas mudanças. Esses processos redefinem a organização social e de trabalho, impactando setores e alterando funções de instituições como família, Estado e escola. Especificamente, observa-se que a escola pública enfrenta desafios crescentes diante da alteração dos papéis tradicionalmente desempenhados pelo Estado, em um contexto em que a mercantilização da educação ganha proeminência. Este cenário é evidenciado pelo aumento na oferta de vagas em instituições educacionais privadas no Brasil, o que resultou em uma expansão das oportunidades de emprego para professores. No entanto, apesar desse crescimento, a Educação Básica privada ainda carece de investigações aprofundadas e análises críticas. Portanto, o propósito central deste artigo é examinar as condições de trabalho nas escolas privadas do estado de São Paulo. Os resultados da pesquisa indicaram uma precarização no trabalho docente, evidenciada por cargas horárias excessivas, instabilidade, e falta de plano de carreira. Revela-se também a desvalorização docente em um ambiente onde a atuação é pautada por aspectos performativos e mercadológicos, com muitos professores atuando como horistas, sem jornada definida ou remuneração adequada diante da carga exigida. Observa-se ainda a fragilidade nas relações coletivas escolares, prejudicando a saúde mental dos professores. A cultura da performatividade sobrecarrega e despessoaliza o profissional, diminuindo a valorização e autonomia docente. Destaca-se a baixa participação em movimentos sociais como sindicatos, cruciais para negociações trabalhistas no setor privado educacional paulista.

Palavras-chave: precarização do trabalho docente; educação básica privada; escolas privadas paulistas.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the world of work has undergone intense transformations driven by neoliberalism and productive restructuring, with the diffusion of managerial principles based on flexibility, standardization and meritocracy. Since the 1990s, teaching work in public education has been marked by greater accountability, intensification of working days and expansion of external control, as evidenced by Oliveira (2010), Barbosa et al. (2020), Freitas (2018) and Hypolito (2020).

According to authors such as Laval (2019) and Leher (2022), the disparate and heterogeneous school conditions in Brazil, resulting from the various funding sources and management models, create a multifaceted and unequal scenario. As for the private sector, impacted by changes in the role of the State, by the commodification of education and by the incorporation of managerial logic, there persists contradictions and multiple layers of complexity.

Market orientations favored the expansion of private educational institutions, especially in basic education, highlighting the reconfigured role of education and its articulation with policies aligned with organizations like the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which promote reforms (fiscal and labor) and the privatization of essential services.

Against this scenario, the availability of vacancies in Brazilian private schools increased, accompanied by a growth in job opportunities for teachers (Quibao Neto, 2020). Said increase in vacancies and, consequently, in job opportunities for teachers contrasts with the scarcity of studies on working conditions in this segment, contributing to an inaccurate picture and masking possible signs of precariousness faced by teachers (Quibao Neto, 2020). In this context, notable are the analyses by Carlindo (2014), Dantas (2018), Quibao Neto (2020) and Terrão (2021).

Considering the need to broaden the discussions on the subject, this article seeks to problematize the working conditions of teachers in the private educational sector of the state of São Paulo. Choosing this geographic scope is justified because this state significantly concentrates private enrollments in Basic Education, corresponding to 72.4% of the total according to data from the 2021 School Census, and holds the largest number of private institutions in Brazil, representing 23% of the national total. Notably, the concept of 'teaching work' constitutes the central axis of the analysis developed throughout the text, based on contributions by Oliveira (2010) and Migliavacca, Vilariño and Remolga (2019).

The analyzed data stem from an empirical qualitative research based on the use of questionnaires answered by teachers and on documentary research. Besides the final considerations, this study has three parts. The first examines the expansion of private schools, notably after the educational reforms of the 1990s, focusing on São Paulo as the epicenter of this trend motivated by market demand and business infrastructure. The second discusses the increasing precarity of teaching work, focusing on working conditions in São Paulo private schools, highlighting work overload, devaluation, and low salaries. Finally, the third presents the perceptions of teachers in private basic education in São Paulo, highlighting a commodified working relationship marked by a lack of recognition and support for professional growth.

METHODS

To identify and problematize the working conditions experienced by private education teachers in São Paulo, we applied an electronic questionnaire with 35 questions between November and December 2022, via Google Forms, answered by 263 anonymous Basic Education teachers in the state of São Paulo (Early Childhood Education, Elementary School, Middle School, High School, and Pre-University Entrance Exam Cram School). The instrument was previously tested and adjusted for the data collection considered in the research.

To ensure representative participation, we adopted the convenience sampling and opinion survey technique, a non-probabilistic methodology that prioritizes the selection of individuals based on their availability and accessibility (Lakatos; Marconi, 2003). Considering the pandemic and to reach a variety of participants, we employed a diverse range of dissemination channels

that included social networks, faculty and academic research groups, in addition to the targeted sending of invitations to participate in the research by email to graduate programs in Education and teaching collectives in São Paulo.

We understand that each social reality has its own intelligibility and acquires meaning through the utterances of its members. Dal Rosso (2008) emphasizes the importance of questioning workers to understand the nuances of their work activities, since they can offer detailed information about their working conditions. Thus, the questionnaires were used as a tool to capture teachers' perceptions of working conditions, considering the diversity of the private school environment.

A total of 263 participants answered the questionnaire who, in this work, will be identified with the letter T for "teacher" followed by a number referring to the order of enrollment. Of the 263 respondents, 168 (63.8%) identified themselves as women and 95 as men, reflecting the historical majority of women in teaching, as pointed out by Hypolito (2020) and Enguita (2004). According to Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira (2021), about 80% of professionals in Brazilian Basic Education were women in 2023.

Using some elements of Bardin's (2009) content analysis, we outlined two axes analysis: "Working Conditions" and "Teaching Staff". The first focused on the material and immaterial elements of teaching work, encompassing aspects such as workload, remuneration, professional recognition, and autonomy. The second focused on collective work dynamics and the role of unions in safeguarding teachers' rights. Analyzing union activity proved particularly relevant given the importance of the CCT (São Paulo, 2024), which regulates working conditions in private schools.

EXPANSION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO: REFLECTIONS OF NEOLIBERALISM

Private schools in Brazilian society are not a recent phenomenon. In fact, their influence and participation have been continuous throughout the last five centuries and, despite the questions raised, they are an important part of Brazil's social and educational formation (Alves, 2009).

Dating back to the early colonial period, the first signs of private education in the country emerged when Catholic missionaries established themselves in schools and seminaries. Its formalization occurred in 1821, by decree of Dom João VI, authorizing private initiative to offer the first years of education. Since then, this sector has become a permanent part of the education system, supported by legal frameworks that guarantee its coexistence with public education and, under certain conditions, access to State resources.

Private schools, operating under private initiative for commercial purposes, are subject to an extensive regulatory framework that includes the Federal Constitution, the Law of Guidelines and Bases for Education (LDB), the Civil Code, the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT), and other specific legislation. These Basic Education institutions must follow the curriculum guidelines and assessment standards applicable to public schools, ensuring compliance with all regulations relevant to their operation.

Borges (2019) emphasizes that the regulation of private schools lies on the interaction of various authorities, entities and instances. These include the Ministry of Education and its affiliated bodies, state and municipal education departments, as well as school administration via the direction, coordination and political-pedagogical project. It is crucial that these institutions strictly comply with labor and tax laws, in addition to establishing clear and detailed contracts with students.

However, within the heterogeneous universe of private schools, it is essential to focus attention on institutions with a predominantly commercial orientation, whose main purpose is to maximize profit for their owners or shareholders. These institutions function as companies that market educational services for remuneration, seeking not only to educate students, but above all to obtain financial gains for investors, as pointed out by Dantas (2018), Borges (2019) and Quibao Neto (2020).

After the 1990s, the educational reforms implemented adopted a business-oriented approach, with emphasis on opening up to foreign investment and privatization. According to Freitas (2018), the mercantile and competitive emphasis became systematically and officially present from the flexibilization, the standardization of results and the valorization of meritocratic individualism.

In 2021, the School Census recorded 49,743 private schools in Brazil, representing 29.5% of the total number of educational institutions in the country. Analyzing the evolution of this number over a decade (from 2011 to 2021), we observe an increase of approximately 5,815 private schools. This growth, which corresponds to approximately 13.2%, shows a significant expansion of the sector nationally.

During the same period, enrollments in private Basic Education also experienced a significant increase of 19.99% (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira, 2021). A more detailed analysis by region indicates that, in 2021, the Southeast was responsible for approximately 45% of total enrollments, equivalent to about 3.9 million students out of the 8.1 million registered. This number, the highest observed in the decade in question, highlights the presence of private education in the Southeast region, representing almost half of the national total (Federação Nacional das Escolas Particulares, 2022).

This trend underscores the concentration of private education in southeastern Brazil, particularly in the state of São Paulo, which has shown consistent growth in enrollments, with an average annual increase of approximately 6.8%. São Paulo also stood out for having the highest number of registered private educational institutions during the period under analysis. This observation highlights the central role of São Paulo, both in the quantitative expansion of students and in the educational infrastructure dedicated to the private sector.

In examining data regarding the distribution of private schools in the state of São Paulo, we note a significant concentration on the Metropolitan Area, corresponding to approximately 55.2% of the state's total, which, according to Dantas (2018), is explained by the significant consumer market and the presence of a vast industrial and business sector, which drive the demand for vacancies. According to IBGE data (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2019), the São Paulo Metropolitan Region is home to about 29% of Brazil's active companies, contributing roughly 32% to the national GDP, highlighting its strategic role and infrastructure for business.

TEACHING WORK IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES: BETWEEN STRUCTURAL PRECARIETY AND PROCEDURAL PRECARIOUSNESS

In delving into this topic, we face the theoretical and analytical challenge of critically understanding how the precarity and precariousness of the workforce affect society, schools, and teaching work.

According to Alves (2007), precarity in the work environment, a historical and ontological condition, emerges from treating labor power as a commodity. From the moment the workforce took on this mercantile nature, social precarity became an intrinsic characteristic of human labor. Thus, when we address precarity, we are referring to a socio-structural condition that permeates human labor and the workforce as a marketable commodity, affecting the objective and subjective conditions of life in society.

While precarity refers to a structural condition associated with the nature of work in capitalism, precariousness describes a process through which working conditions deteriorate, resulting in greater insecurity and vulnerability for workers.

According to Antunes (2015), transformations in the work environment such as rising unemployment rates, insecurity, growth in outsourced and temporary work, along with a scenario of deskilling and increasing working hours, have profoundly reconfigured the social fabric. This new model brought about the need for a different type of worker (Sennett, 2006), one that would adapt to organizational demands, consequently fostering a reinvention in the educational system.

According to Alves (2007), work precariousness in Brazil has a complex nature, adding elements of our colonial heritage with the effects of neoliberal economic globalization. He points out that, although precarious employment affects various professions, in education, due to the intrinsic complexity of teaching work, its impacts are particularly pronounced.

Oliveira (2010) defines teaching work as a category full of meaning that goes beyond classroom teaching because its object is, above all, the human relationship. Hence, what defines a teaching professional is their work, that is, their experience in educational activities in the role of someone who educates or contributes to it. She states that the socialization of experiences historically constructed and elaborated through work constitutes a key notion for understanding the category, since analyses of teaching work seek to capture the subjects and their relationships based on experience, that is, the daily work process.

Indeed, the category of teaching work encompasses numerous individuals who work in the educational process in its various configurations, whether in the school setting or in other educational institutions (Oliveira, 2010). However, this article focuses on teachers due to their centrality in the pedagogical process and because they are primarily responsible for public policies and school outcomes. According to the author, teaching work also involves planning, project development, and collective participation in the curriculum and assessment.

In the case of private schools, teachers are given additional responsibilities, including participating in extracurricular activities, managing administrative tasks, integrating innovative educational technologies, offering individualized support for students and parents, as well as conducting periodic evaluations of the education systems. Such obligations significantly increase the workload, highlighting particular aspects of precarious employment and the reduction of teachers' control over their own work. Often, these additional requirements are not accompanied by proportional financial compensation or formal recognition of their contribution to the functioning of educational institutions.

In this regard, an analytical link can be established with the perspective defended by Dal Rosso (2008), who emphasizes how the increasing and flexibilization of work, phenomena predominant in the business sector, have been expanding into the educational sector since it subjects educators to excessive pressures and demands, compromising the effective execution of their activities.

Enguita (2004) and Hypolito (2020) emphasize that teaching staff face a historical process of devaluation, progressively losing professional prestige and control over their work, and despite some resistance, such consequences are often unavoidable and affect the profession as a whole. The authors argue that capitalist logic subjects teaching work to exploitation, creating adverse conditions for carrying out activities, specifically pedagogical ones.

Several factors, such as job instability, heavy workloads, low pay, inadequate school infrastructure, lack of teaching resources, minimal or nonexistent institutional support, limited teaching autonomy, and weak interpersonal relationships, directly influence teachers' motivation, satisfaction, and physical and emotional well-being (Pagani; Fernandes; Barbosa, 2023).

SIGNS OF PRECARIETY: WHAT DO TEACHERS SAY ABOUT THEIR WORKING CONDITIONS?

Teaching conditions, which include material (infrastructure and resources) and immaterial (interpersonal relationships and administrative demands) elements, directly affect teaching and professional development, impacting teaching practice. According to Dal Rosso (2008) and Migliavacca (2010), these conditions go beyond the physical space and pedagogical resources, also encompassing aspects such as bureaucracy, workload, support and institutional recognition.

In the case of private education teachers, working conditions are a complex issue. Quibao Neto (2020) argues that heterogeneity in supply and demand of these institutions in Basic Education play a preponderant role in configuring a varied work environment, resulting in a wide range of different working conditions.

In the state of São Paulo, working conditions in private schools are defined by the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CCT) (São Paulo, 2024), a regulation resulting from negotiations between employers and workers' unions. CCT defines guidelines such as salaries, working hours, bonuses, benefits (e.g., basic food baskets and grants), stability and specific rights for pregnant teachers, teachers with serious illnesses and close to retirement.

In analyzing the CCT (São Paulo, 2024), we find clear evidence of the precarious nature of teaching work, namely: the lack of a minimum wage, which leads to diffuse and inconsistent remuneration; the high rate of temporary employment contracts, generating instability and insecurity; the absence of a clear policy for professional development, progression, and career recognition; and the offer of benefits below fair values (activity hours and basic food basket). Such factors evince the precarious work in private schools and contrast with the socially reproduced image that labor conditions in these institutions are necessarily better than in public schools.

For 128 of the 263 participating teachers, job instability and the lack of a career plan emerged as the main factors compromising working conditions, associated with a perceived devaluation by institutions and society in general. These aspects can be observed in the statements by T187: *"It's purely a business relationship. I feel disposable"*; and by T27: *"We have no guarantees. I'm not registered and I have to work very hard to earn a reasonable income, not to mention that I don't know if I'll have the same number of classes or if I'll continue in the school next year"*. Speaking freely, T129 emphasized: *"There is no support for my career. I am unclear about opportunities for professional growth"*; T89 stated: *"I feel like I am being treated as just a number on a cost spreadsheet, not as a person with value and importance"*; and T227 added, *"My position is unstable and uncertain. I don't know if I will be able to keep my job in the long term or if I will be dismissed without notice"*.

This feeling of insecurity and uncertainty ultimately prevents long-term planning, as many teachers find themselves facing dismissal at the end of each academic year or semester, which can harm their quality of life and emotional health, as well as their classroom performance. Job instability is linked to deregulation and flexibilization of the labor market, intensified by the advance of neoliberalism (Antunes, 2015; Dardot; Laval, 2016).

Focus on efficiency and cost reduction has decreased spending on labor rights, leading to the hiring of teachers under precarious conditions such as temporary contracts or without formal employment, which worsened after the 2017 Labor Reform. Such flexible approach facilitates the hiring of hourly teachers and self-employed workers, and favors dismissals without payment of labor obligations, reflecting neoliberal policies that place economic efficiency above stability and workers' rights.

All statements reveal a common perceived devaluation, potentially exacerbated by the competitive and commodified environment of private schools. In this environment, the urgency to show results and attract clients can lead to a disproportionate concern with projecting a successful image and efforts to reduce costs. In a freely written statement at the end of the questionnaire, T77 stated:

Today I realize that in private institutions, those who pay for the school dictate the rules; we have to be very careful when addressing students, parents, or guardians. It's regrettable.

Indeed, the academic literature on education and teaching work has been discussing this issue. Researchers such as Silva (2017), Dantas (2018), Quibao Neto (2020) and Terrão (2021) emphasize that the power structure within private schools can favor a scenario where the priorities of parents, guardians and administrators, in relation to tuition fees, outweigh the educational needs of students and the demands of teachers and the pedagogical team.

Apple (2006) argues that private schools are often seen as businesses that offer a product to be purchased by parents, which can promote a culture that prioritizes customer service and satisfaction at the expense of teaching quality and teacher autonomy. Teachers may feel pressured to meet parental demands, even at the expense of teaching quality, and are also expected to maintain consistently positive relationships with families, which creates additional demands for communication and interaction.

According to Ball (2002), the functioning dynamics of private school institutions expresses a culture of performativity in which education is seen as a marketable product. This focus transforms education into a product and shapes identities based on market values. Said culture prioritizes results like tests and exams over formative dimensions, encouraging competition between institutions and promoting 'successful' students as marketing case studies.

Consequently, the performativity and commodification of education negatively affect the teaching work in the private sector, contributing to increasing bureaucratization and managerialism. Teachers are increasingly pressured to produce tangible and measurable results, leading to a homogenization of teaching and a reduction in professional autonomy.

Determining teaching workload in private schools is also a complex issue since, unlike public schools which have regulated career plans, this sector does not follow rigid parameters regarding the definition of minimum or maximum working hours at the time of hiring. A situation aggravated by the fact that many professionals are hired as hourly teachers.

Given the reduced pay and the limited number of classes assigned per contract, these professionals tend to expand the number of institutions where they work, further fragmenting their work routine. In the survey, 152 teachers reported working in more than one school and education network, accounting for 57.79% of the respondents. Holding multiple jobs is a practice that can significantly compromise professionals' quality of life, resulting in physical and mental exhaustion, high stress levels, and challenges in managing the balance between personal and professional life. An analysis by Tardif and Lessard (2013), who discuss the implications of work overload on teacher well-being, corroborates this phenomenon.

Teaching is a physically and mentally demanding activity. When a teacher works many hours a week, they lack time for other important activities—whether for themselves, such as taking care of their health and having leisure and cultural time, or for professional investment through updating their knowledge of content and new teaching methodologies. Additionally, an excessive workload can harm the quality of education offered to students as the teacher, under these conditions, has little time to adequately prepare lessons, correct assignments and tests, conduct research, and coordinate projects. By spending most of the week teaching many classes in order to receive a minimally satisfactory salary, teachers can become demotivated and discouraged with their careers.

Working on an hourly basis, common among teachers in private schools, compromises remuneration due to the workload required, given the lack of a clearly defined work schedule. Law No. 11,738/2008, which establishes the minimum wage for public Basic Education, does not apply to the private sector, whose conditions are defined by Collective Bargaining Agreements between employers and workers' unions.

Excessive work and lack of autonomy constitute the main aspects that characterize the precarity of the teaching profession (Enguita, 2004; Oliveira, 2010; Hypolito, 2020). In private schools, excessive teaching work stems from pressure for results and competition between institutions and education systems, which often leads to teachers being overburdened with increased workloads, number of classes, and the requirement for constant updating of knowledge and pedagogical practices.

Understanding teaching as a collective experience is fundamental to raising the quality of education and fostering a healthy work environment (Tardif; Lessard, 2013). We thus sought to identify how working conditions can be affected by the relationships established in the private school environment.

According to Enguita (2004), teaching is essentially a collaborative practice, an aspect reinforced by the unique nature of the profession sustained by empathy, exchange of experiences and cooperation. However, 68% of the participating teachers (178 respondents) point to a lack of unity and partnership in private schools, highlighting a perceived fragility in collective relationships within the school environment. This lack of cooperation can amplify feelings of instability and dissatisfaction in the work environment, as expressed in the following excerpts: T51 "*I have been a private school teacher for 11 years and I always hear the same types of complaints [...]. I can confidently say that in the private school system what is often lacking is a relationship of unity, partnership and camaraderie*".

T47 *"I believe that working for a private institution brings teachers only partial satisfaction; there's no contractual career support, no camaraderie, and teachers become rivals, making professional fulfillment more unstable".*

Moreover, the influence of family members and students on school decisions compromises both teachers' autonomy and mental health, as described by the participant below:

A process of deterioration has taken hold of the private school system and become much more serious than it already was. Private schools want to attract clients, and the competition is often unfair. Procedures are invented to attract students, but we teachers know that it's just a facade. Families and students run the school, even interfering in the dismissal of teachers (T98).

Teachers' perceptions highlight the repercussions of market logic on education, with the increased value placed on diverse assessment methods, the weakening of school relationships, and the fostering of a competitive ethos (Ball, 2012). This emphasis on institutional 'spectacles,' centered on performance and competition, negatively affects not only professional relationships among teachers, but also their mental and emotional health, as one participant expressed:

I see that private schools demand a lot from teachers, placing responsibility and blame on them [...]. We take great care of the students' emotional well-being, but schools forget that teachers carry their own problems, the school's problems, and the students' problems (T217).

In private schools, teacher precarity is increased by the commodification of education, which imposes strict controls, individualizes work, and affects relationships with students. Frequent evaluations, such as satisfaction surveys applied to students, reinforce the logic of performance from the consumer's perspective, increasing the pressure for results and compromising pedagogical autonomy:

In my experience, I feel that teaching could be much more efficient than it is. I argue that this doesn't happen for several reasons, including: lack of job security; bureaucracy; lack of autonomy; salary differences between teachers; and the fact that professionals seem to be subordinate to the students' guardians. I believe this last point is very detrimental to the school and the teaching-learning process (T166).

This dynamic may be the cornerstone of the perceived lack of camaraderie and unity among teachers, as well as constant pressure on student performance. As Ball (2012) points out, the culture of performativity prioritizes performance over interpersonal relationships, leading to excessive teaching work and a devaluation of the educational process. This scenario contributes to feelings of professional devaluation, lack of autonomy, and insecurity among private school teachers.

Regarding collective organizations in education, more specifically unions and teachers' associations, of the 263 participants, 179 are not affiliated with labor unions and 84 are. Of these, 44 are affiliated with the São Paulo Teachers' Union (SINPRO); 13, who also work in public schools, are affiliated with the São Paulo State Teachers' Association (APEOESP); and 27 did not respond or omitted the information.

Teachers' opinions on the role of unions vary: while some express disbelief and see the entities as focused on personal and political self-promotion, others suggest a closer relationship with the teaching staff, citing adverse classroom conditions, as is evident in T54's statement: *"Union members should continue to act in the classroom, as their base; by becoming bureaucrats, they forget the material conditions that the base faces".*

The respondents also revealed a perceived partial representation by their colleagues, highlighting a distrust and dissatisfaction with the unions, attributed to the perception that they are no longer representative and even a fear of openly expressing their opinions: *"I believe that the union is not very effective; many of us no longer trust its ability to resolve issues or fight for our rights. It is common to hear criticism and mockery from the teachers themselves about the union's actions, both in the hallways and in the teachers' rooms" (T135); "I feel that there*

is not much collective spirit or unity in the category. We have many teachers, the group is large, but when a strike is called, it is disappointing to see that only a minority shows up" (T243). "I still fight, I still believe, and I always want to believe! So that everything I do in my life makes sense" (T70).

It is thus noticeable that the existence of unions is viewed with skepticism by many teachers, who question the effectiveness of these organizations in fighting for better working conditions. The perceived partial representation and distrust in the ability of unions to resolve essential issues reflect a disconnect between union organizations and the teaching staff.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Private school teachers' working conditions is a topic little explored in educational research, a fact easily identified by the literature review, either due to difficulties in collecting data in a sector marked by the precarity of its professionals or by the contractual and conventional heterogeneity found in Brazilian states.

Work in private education is associated with insecurity, resulting in greater submission of teachers to unfavorable working conditions and a lack of actions aimed at improving their working conditions, since it falls outside the scope of regulations specifically geared toward public basic education.

Our analysis revealed that the teaching work is little valued in an environment where performance is guided by performative and marketing aspects. From the perspective of collective work, the lack of unity and partnership among members of the school community, coupled with harmful competitiveness, weakens internal school relationships, creating a competitive environment that diminishes the value and importance of working together.

When individual performance is emphasized over teamwork, one tends to focus more on winning clients (students and their families) than on improving working conditions and the educational process itself. Besides, the lack of unity and partnership among school members can create a demotivating, isolated, and lonely work environment, harming teachers' mental and emotional health.

The culture of performativity, which values performance over interpersonal relationships, imposes an excessive workload on teachers, leading to a loss of meaning in the teaching-learning process and thus contributing to professional devaluation and limited autonomy.

Also notable is the low turnout of teachers in social movements, especially unions, since in São Paulo the main document regulating labor relations in private education (the CCT) is signed between unions and employers. Contributors to this reality are the lack of political engagement and awareness among teachers about their labor and social rights, mistrust or dissatisfaction with union leaders, insecurity regarding employers, and work overload. Several consequences emerge from this situation, including difficulty in negotiating rights and benefits, an increase in the number of labor violations and a reduction in teachers' quality of life, professional devaluation, and reduced capacity for social mobilization. All of this contributes to the deterioration of working conditions and, consequently, of the education offered to students.

Given the growing presence of private Basic Education in Brazil and the scarcity of studies on the subject, conducting investigations to identify areas little explored in this field and thus enable the creation of alternatives that guarantee better teaching working conditions is essential. Our results underscore the need to discuss and confront the precarity of teaching work in private Basic Education, seeking solutions that can value and guarantee rights to professionals.

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