

**POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES FOR THE TEACHERS IN
LATIN AMERICA**

***DESAFIOS POLÍTICOS, ECONÔMICOS E SOCIAIS PARA OS DOCENTES NA
AMÉRICA LATINA***

***DESAFÍOS POLÍTICOS, ECONÓMICOS Y SOCIALES PARA LOS DOCENTES EN
AMÉRICA LATINA***

Fabiano Antonio dos SANTOS¹
João Batista ZANARDINI²
Hellen Jaqueline MARQUES³

ABSTRACT: The objective of this article is to establish an overview about some of the challenges that face teaching condition in Latin America, especially in Brazil. Such challenges are constituted of economics, political and social aspects, although they don't dissociate, because there are a dialectical relation between them. The challenges that the teachers face for the realization of education in the different contexts include several themes, such as: initial teacher training, teaching career, education quality, large scale evaluation and union political participation. Each one of these, in their specificities and interdependence, cause certain reactions, both in the aspects of the official propositions and in the forms of confrontation by the teachers.

KEYWORDS: Teaching career. Democracy. State. Educational policy. Educational work.

RESUMO: O objetivo deste artigo é estabelecer um panorama sobre alguns dos desafios que se colocam frente à condição de docente na América Latina, em especial no Brasil. Tais desafios são constituídos de aspectos econômicos, políticos e sociais, muito embora não se dissociem, pois há entre eles uma relação dialética. Os desafios que os docentes enfrentam para a realização da educação nos diferentes contextos abrangem temas diversos, tais como: formação inicial de professores, carreira docente, qualidade da educação, avaliação em larga escala e participação político-sindical. Cada um desses, em sua especificidade e interdependência, provoca determinadas reações, tanto no aspecto das proposições oficiais, quanto nas formas de enfrentamento por parte dos docentes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Carreira docente. Democracia. Estado. Política educacional. Trabalho educativo.

¹ Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), Corumbá – MS – Brazil. Professor of the Pedagogy Course and the Postgraduate Program in Education (PPGE/CPAN). Doctorate in Education (UFSC). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7703-8520>. E-mail: fabiano.santos@ufms.br

² Western Paraná State University (UNIOESTE), Cascavel – PR – Brazil. Professor of the Pedagogy Course. Doctorate in Education (UFSC). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1514-6489>. E-mail: j.zanardini@uol.com.br

³ Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), Corumbá – MS – Brazil. Professor of the Pedagogy Course. Doctorate in School Education (UNESP). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1146-2801>. E-mail: hellen.marques@ufms.br

RESUMEN: *El objetivo de este artículo es proporcionar una visión general de algunos de los desafíos frente a la condición del docente en América Latina, especialmente en Brasil. Dichos desafíos están compuestos por aspectos económicos, políticos y sociales, aunque no se disocian, ya que existe una relación dialéctica entre ellos. Los retos que enfrentan los docentes para la realización de la educación en diferentes contextos, abarcan diferentes temas, tales como: formación inicial de docentes, carrera docente, calidad de la educación, evaluación a gran escala y participación de sindicatos políticos. Cada uno de estos, en su especificidad e interdependencia, provoca ciertas reacciones, luchas, condicionamientos y posibilidades que van desde las posiciones oficiales, a los posicionamientos sectoriales, así como a los modos de formas de confrontación de los/as docentes.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Carrera docente. Democracia. Estado. Política Educativa. Trabajo educativo.*

Introduction

The purpose of this text is to provide an overview of some of the challenges that teachers in the Latin American region, especially Brazil, have faced in the past decades to carry out their task, whether in the more general political sphere, or in the specific aspects of their formation and practical activity. Therefore, initially we highlight three aspects of these challenges: economic, political and social.

These aspects are marked by the great difficulty that part of the Latin American region has in maintaining the democratic foundations of a society that, antagonistically, excels in inequalities. The challenges, in this sense, are based on the struggle for the democratization of education and politics as fundamental superstructural aspects in guaranteeing a position against hegemony.

Most Latin American countries have gone through, or are still going through, dictatorships that have taken the lives of workers, hijacked their subjectivities, impelled fear as a control and government mechanism. According to Wood (2006), when we deal with the task of understanding the role of democracy in overcoming class society, we cannot refrain from considering it at this stage of society as a privilege of the few. For the author, “in modern capitalist democracy, socioeconomic inequality and exploitation coexist with civic freedom and equality”⁴ (WOOD, 2006, p. 173).

However, democracy in capitalism becomes more formal than real, as it comes up against the social class structure. It does not advance in real terms because for the bourgeoisie

⁴ “na democracia capitalista moderna, a desigualdade e a exploração socioeconômicas coexistem com a liberdade e a igualdade cívicas”

the rhetoric of democracy is more important than its actual effectiveness. As a result of this point, there is the role that the State has played in the countries of the region, more specifically in the numerous reformulations on its actions, almost always represented by proposals for reforms that aimed at adapting them to the requirements of capital.

In addition, we highlight the precariousness faced by workers in the region, which occupies a peripheral place in capitalist development and, for this reason, collides with austerity measures against workers. The result of these austerity measures is the increasing deregulation of work and the growth of informality, including among teaching workers. This general framework assumes an axial role for the problem that pervades our position in this article, since almost all Latin American countries have undergone neoliberal reforms. This does not escape the implementation of educational policies that decisively interfere in the educational process and in the actions of its subjects.

As it could not be otherwise, Latin America demonstrates a great effort to insert itself in this logic and the professors have been constituted central figure in the educational policies and reforms. According to Oliveira (2008, p. 29):

Teachers are generally considered to be primarily responsible for student, school and system performance in the context of educational reforms. In view of the varied functions that the public school currently assumes, teachers are often faced with the need to respond to new demands. In a context of poverty, this situation worsens, teachers are forced to perform functions beyond their technical and human capacity.⁵

The challenges for the Latin American working class, in this article materialized in the teaching class, are complex, and we certainly do not intend to exhaust them in the following pages. These are themes that need to be considered in their historicity and relations with the material conditions to which they are conditioned, especially in view of the idiosyncrasies of each country in the way in which these categories present themselves, giving an even greater challenge in more general terms. Therefore, we seek to list points of convergence that bring the countries of the region closer together. We understand that the debate is urgent to compose an agenda of struggles organized by workers.

⁵ Os professores são, em geral, considerados os principais responsáveis pelo desempenho dos alunos, da escola e do sistema no contexto de reformas educacionais. Diante das variadas funções que a escola pública assume na atualidade, os professores encontram-se muitas vezes diante da necessidade de responder a novas exigências. Em contexto de pobreza tal quadro se agrava, os professores se vêem obrigados a desempenhar funções além de sua capacidade técnica e humana.

Challenges in realizing the teacher's social function

The proposals that defend quality education in Latin American countries, based on the perspectives of organizations such as the World Bank, OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) and UNESCO (United Nations Organization for the Education, Science and Culture), emphasize the importance of pedagogical reforms and adaptation of individuals to the social demands resulting from globalization. The teacher is the protagonist in this process and needs to face numerous challenges so that he can fulfill his role, since he is constantly questioned and the target of different attempts at control.

A study published by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (ELACQUA *et al.*, 2018) on the lack of prestige of teachers in Latin America shows that countries in the region are lagging behind in learning, which results in poor quality of education. The publication also indicates that the main defining factor for countries' poor performance is the effectiveness of teachers. "There is a solid consensus among experts that the most relevant factor for school learning is the quality of teachers. The most effective teachers are those able to motivate learning in their students"⁶ (ELACQUA *et al.*, 2018, p. 5).

The main conclusions about the problems encountered are that teachers in Latin America do not develop good practices, do not take advantage of class time for teaching content and do not master the necessary knowledge for effective teaching (ELACQUA *et al.*, 2018). For the authors, "to raise the quality of education, it is crucial to increase the effectiveness of teachers. In this sense, one must ask whether some of the learning improvements in the region are related to efforts to improve the effectiveness of teachers"⁷ (ELACQUA *et al.*, 2018, p. 10).

According to the study, the countries that developed and implemented pedagogical reforms in the last decades were the ones that most showed advances and improvements in the indexes of international assessments, such as the International Student Assessment Program (PISA). For example, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru are cited, as they are the only countries in Latin America that have introduced systemic educational reforms based mainly on meritocracy (ELACQUA *et al.*, 2018). These reforms involve everything from basic

⁶ "Há um sólido consenso entre os especialistas de que o fator mais relevante para a aprendizagem escolar é a qualidade dos professores. Os professores mais eficazes são aqueles capazes de motivar a aprendizagem em seus alunos"

⁷ "para elevar a qualidade da educação, é crucial aumentar a eficácia dos professores. Nesse sentido, deve-se perguntar se algumas das melhorias de aprendizagem na região estão relacionadas aos esforços para aprimorar a eficácia dos professores"

education to higher education, seeking to meet the requirements for improving teaching and raising the prestige of the teaching career.

In a critical analysis of the interventions of Multilateral Organizations in higher education in Colombia, Salazar (2018) highlights that in recent years universities in the country have adapted to implement international guidelines.

Not to be outdone, HEIs in Colombia have incorporated the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (BM) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), entities interested in the high profits they generate and, therefore, to place, under the dynamics of academic capitalism, numbers of investments that bear fruit in research and innovation, in parallel with the formation of students who, in some universities, have become secondary activity (SALAZAR, 2018, p. 197).⁸

In this movement, not only are the curricula reviewed, but the activities of university professors undergo an inversion of values.

[...] currently, all teachers "with administrative functions" must be able to perform them, since the university has increased the obligations of its teachers, making them, moreover, a way of measuring and evaluating the productivity of its educators, taking into account the standards imposed by quality policies and national and international rankings. As a result, the way in which the teacher is currently qualified has changed; the mark for the life he left on the student has lost importance and, on the contrary, the capacity for administrative and academic production resulting from research and innovation projects, publications, resource management, leadership, proactivity, competitiveness and efficiency is valued from those who guided the classes with wisdom (SALAZAR, 2018, p. 199-200).⁹

Combined with concerns about the production of knowledge in the context of Higher Education Institutions throughout Latin America, we can think of other fronts of combat that have enchanted pedagogical practices, teaching planning, curricula and assessments at different levels and spaces of formation. For example, the proposals and programs for implementing

⁸ Para não ficar para trás, as IES na Colômbia têm incorporado as recomendações do Fundo Monetário Internacional (FMI), do Banco Mundial (BM) e da Organização para a Cooperação e o Desenvolvimento Econômico (OCDE), entidades interessadas nos altos lucros que geram e, portanto, em colocar, sob as dinâmicas do capitalismo acadêmico, números de investimentos que dão fruto em pesquisa e inovação, paralelamente à formação dos estudantes que, em algumas universidades, tem se tornado atividade secundária (SALAZAR, 2018, p. 197, tradução nossa).

⁹ [...] atualmente todo professor "com funções administrativas" deve estar capacitado a executá-las, posto que a universidade tem incrementado as obrigações de seus professores, fazendo delas, ademais, uma forma de medir e avaliar a produtividade de seus educadores, tendo em conta os padrões impostos pelas políticas de qualidade e pelos rankings nacionais e internacionais. Em consequência, a maneira como se qualifica atualmente o docente tem mudado; a marca para a vida que deixava no estudante perdeu importância e, pelo contrário, se valoriza a capacidade de produção administrativa e acadêmica resultado de projetos de investigação e inovação, publicações, a gestão de recursos, liderança, proatividade, competitividade e eficiência de quem tradicionalmente orientavam as classes com sabedoria (SALAZAR, 2018, p. 199-200, tradução nossa).

business management as a model for education, with the objective of adapting education to the labor market and reducing government interventions (State responsibility), including compromising the resources allocated to schools and public universities; and the ranking of educational institutions by means of notes and national indexes, such as the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) in Brazil, and international ones, such as PISA. For Multilateral Agencies and governments, these indexes are an important means of defining the quality of education in countries and comparing their progress.

To account for the evaluation processes, it is necessary that the curricula are adapted and can be consistent with the globally prioritized content. Thus, guidelines and curricular bases are approved that guide the knowledge to be developed in the teaching and learning processes. In addition, materials and textbooks are produced which, when sent to institutions, become mandatory in didactic planning.

The poor performance of a country in the world ranking, according to Elacqua *et al.* (2018), implies a weak educational policy, or, even more perversely, in incompetent teachers, because the evaluation systems in basic and higher education when evaluating students blame the teacher for the results. Therefore, in parallel, evaluation policies should also include teachers.

Elacqua *et al.* (2018) cite some of the instruments used in countries in Latin America for teacher evaluation: written tests, observation or recording of classes, evidence or reflections on teaching practice, interview or co-evaluation by another teacher, self-evaluation, report by the principal or principal assistant, research with students or families. In Chile, teachers are assessed as excellent, competent, basic or unsatisfactory and, depending on their performance and actions in a predetermined period, they can be dismissed from their careers (ELACQUA *et al.*, 2018).

One of the key points in current assessments of pedagogical practice has been the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Learning problems fall into the gap in methodologies and innovation is required, without, however, reflecting on access and real appropriation of technological resources, both by the teacher and the students. This reinforces the social inequality and the formation conditions that the working class is subject to. Allied to this we have the lack, or scarcity, of continuing education courses for teachers. Or, when they exist, they are limited and pre-determined by the secretariats and governments, taking into account the content and methodologies required for the teacher.

The demand for these courses also decreases, as they do not, for the most part, meet the real needs of the school reality. This demonstrates the lack of dialogue for building proposals

and alternatives for the problems faced at school and, in a way, it is also desired and purposeful, so that collective participation and debate is minimized. Instead, great examples are used to be followed, including prizes in contests to define “good” practices. In this direction, the proposals for teacher certification, based on meritocracy, take shape, since “a meritocratic teaching career can be considered as an instrument of professional development that contributes to the revaluation of the profession”¹⁰ (ELACQUA *et al.*, 2018, p. 105).

It is important to note that such policies of teacher evaluation, despite being combated through strikes and union strikes, have gained strength in the face of the appeasement of the class struggle and the political alienation of teachers. Based on a very engaging discourse, Multilateral Organizations produce their policies by promoting them through successful examples. Regarding teacher evaluation, meritocracy is shown as one of the main *slogans*, as it would have the capacity to involve teachers as essential partners in the implementation of these policies.

Experience indicates that it is important that educational systems interested in starting or consolidating meritocratic teaching careers establish consensus with teachers on the essential elements of the proposal. Otherwise, there is a high risk that the implementation of the reform will be rejected and its progress will be continually blocked by the unions (Bruns and Luque, 2015) (ELACQUA *et al.*, 2018, p. 214).¹¹

The weakening of a political, critical and combative stance in education allows the existence and strengthening of movements and laws that inhibit the autonomy of the teacher in the classroom, as for example the one proposed by the “Escola Sem Partido” (School Without Party) movement in Brazil. These perspectives are disguised as an alleged ideological neutrality, culminating in the persecution of teachers and the curbing of critical and transformative thinking about reality.

Nevertheless, the formation of public opinion regarding the teaching function and work is essential for the unification of the class struggle, as the guidelines for the implementation of reforms without major social obstacles fall on the creation of mechanisms of accountability and devaluation of teachers in the face of civil society, as indicated in the study published by the IDB:

¹⁰ “uma carreira docente meritocrática pode ser considerada como um instrumento de desenvolvimento profissional que contribui para a revalorização da profissão”

¹¹ A experiência indica que é importante que os sistemas educacionais interessados em iniciar ou consolidar carreiras docentes meritocráticas estabeleçam consenso com os professores sobre os elementos essenciais da proposta. Do contrário, há um alto risco de que a implementação da reforma seja rejeitada e seu progresso seja continuamente travado pelos sindicatos (Bruns e Luque, 2015) (ELACQUA *et al.*, 2018, p. 214).

Another aspect to be highlighted about the experience of the countries studied is that the reforms of teaching careers received support from civil society, the private sector and the press. In Ecuador and Peru, the government spread the poor results of teachers and students on standardized tests to highlight the urgency of educational reform. In Mexico, the corrupt practices of the teachers' union have brought the entity into disrepute and led to population support for teacher reform. In these countries, mobilizing public support was essential to obtain greater support for reforms (ELACQUA *et al.*, 2018, p. 214).¹²

The measures are, therefore, based on the formation of consensus. Which, according to Gramsci (2011), means the struggle for the hegemony of one class over the other. For the author, the formation of public opinion is one of the strategies for seizing power and reaching consensus:

What is called "public opinion" is closely linked to political hegemony, that is, it is the point of contact between "civil society" and "political society", between consensus and force. When the State wants to initiate an action that is not very popular, it creates preventive adequate public opinion, that is, it organizes and centralizes certain elements of civil society [...]. Public opinion is the political content of public political will, which could be discordant: for this reason, there is a struggle for the monopoly of public opinion bodies - newspapers, parties, Parliament - so that a single force shapes opinion and, therefore, the national political will, disaggregating those who disagree in an individual and inorganic dust cloud (GRAMSCI, 2011, p. 265).¹³

Baczinski and Comar (2016) emphasize the importance of the effective realization of democracy in education, starting with the construction of a truly democratic management, based on the committed participation of all the actors involved. For that, according to the authors, it is necessary to master knowledge, but not any knowledge, but, yes, those that enable the unveiling of capitalist relations in education. This implies "understanding the ideals exposed in the international guidelines that defined a new form of management and school"¹⁴

¹² Outro aspecto a ser destacado sobre a experiência dos países estudados é que as reformas das carreiras docentes receberam apoio da sociedade civil, do setor privado e da imprensa. No Equador e no Peru, o governo difundiu os baixos resultados dos professores e alunos nas provas padronizadas para evidenciar a urgência de uma reforma educacional. No México, as práticas corruptas do sindicato dos professores acarretaram o desprestígio da entidade e levaram ao apoio da população à reforma docente. Nesses países, mobilizar o apoio da opinião pública foi essencial para obter um maior respaldo para as reformas (ELACQUA *et al.*, 2018, p. 214).

¹³ O que se chama de "opinião pública" está estreitamente ligado à hegemonia política, ou seja, é o ponto de contato entre a "sociedade civil" e a "sociedade política", entre o consenso e a força. O Estado, quando quer iniciar uma ação pouco popular, cria preventivamente a opinião pública adequada, ou seja, organiza e centraliza certos elementos da sociedade civil [...]. A opinião pública é o conteúdo político da vontade política pública, que poderia ser discordante: por isto, existe luta pelo monopólio dos órgãos da opinião pública – jornais, partidos, Parlamento –, de modo que uma só força modele a opinião e, portanto, a vontade política nacional, desagregando os que discordam numa nuvem de poeira individual e inorgânica (GRAMSCI, 2011, p. 265).

¹⁴ "compreensão dos ideais expostos nas orientações internacionais que definiram nova forma de gestão e de escola"

(BACZINSKI; COMAR, 2016, p. 158). This challenge corroborates the historical need for formation of organic intellectuals, already pointed out by Gramsci (2010).

Precarious work (teaching) in times of capital globalization

When Hayek (2010) announced, in one of his most important books on neoliberalism, that this economic model did not present “stationary dogmas” that would put it as a creed, with fixed and immutable rules, it was certainly trying to present the supposed advantages that extreme market freedom would have on classical liberalism. The Austrian economist stated that “The fundamental principle according to which we must make the most of the spontaneous forces of society and resort as little as possible to coercion can have an infinite variety of applications”¹⁵ (HAYEK, 2010, p. 42). However, hiding that its formulation sought to soften one of its main foundations: the coercion of thousands of workers to follow the rules of the market. Neoliberalism has been based precisely on pressure for precarious workers to submit to working conditions that are almost always inhuman and completely degrading.

The intensification of work and the precariousness came with a discourse of modernization of relations and working conditions, promoted by the globalization of capital (CHESNAIS, 1995). As Antunes (2018) rightly points out, we live an important morphology of the working class, which is no longer mainly part of the productive sector and becomes more and more part of the service sector. This, because it behaves more flexibly to the logic of capitalist accumulation based on productive restructuring, has proved to be the most important means of boosting capitalist development in contemporary times.

Antunes (2006) points out that the precariousness of work has been taken to levels rarely seen in the history of capitalism as a response of the productive system to the desire to maintain the usual profitability at high levels and, with this, changing the different spheres of work. In factories, for example, the implementation of technologies has become the most promising way to increase profit, which, as a result, has drastically reduced the number of jobs due to the replacement by machines.

The reflection of this in the educational field makes teachers fall into a context of structural precariousness: they are “entrepreneurial” teachers; subcontractors; outsourced. Of the various forms of hiring and the performance of teachers, we highlight two: one because it has already become the hegemonic way of hiring teachers in public schools in Brazil and some

¹⁵ “O princípio fundamental segundo o qual devemos utilizar ao máximo as forças espontâneas da sociedade e recorrer o menos possível à coerção pode ter uma infinita variedade de aplicações”

countries in Latin America (temporary teachers); and the other is application teachers, following the growth trend of the infoproletariat (ANTUNES, 2018).

Under the discourse widely disseminated by Multilateral Organizations that teachers need to submit to a new logic of career structuring and adapt to the new morphology of work, concepts such as modernization and professionalization (UNESCO, 2013) are used to pressure changes in hiring of teachers. According to Unesco (2013), teachers in the Latin American region have, for the most part, stability acquired through the form of contracting through public tenders.

Presenting several teaching careers models, Unesco (2013) defends a horizontal model. With this, it defends that the teaching career be launched under the capitalist logic of instability, precariousness and intensification. Under the denomination of hierarchical career, it points out models considered exemplary such as the Colombian one, which offers differentiated salaries based on income, responsibility and developed skills. The intention is to impose on the teachers of the region the logic of instability in the private sector, inserting them in the logic of exploitation and precarious work (ANTUNES, 2018).

The defense for professionalization and modernization of the teaching career, through insertion in private logic, follows the principle of dismantling the social legislation that protects labor and increasing the destruction of labor rights acquired through years of social struggles. There is no recent attempt to replace the hiring of teachers through public tenders with forms specific to private initiative. Inspired by the private sector, it is argued that the end of stability would generate gains for the selection of the best candidates for the teaching career and that a career based on stability would be too generous in an economic context of instability. “The teaching profession also offers long vacations, relatively generous health and retirement benefits and a short and 'family-friendly' official day and work”¹⁶ (BANCO MUNDIAL, 2014, p. 11).

The Banco Mundial (2014) continues to defend the end of contracting by public tender, presenting some professional rewards if more “rigorous” selection measures are adopted: recognition and prestige, professional dominance and growth, salary differentials, pensions and differentiated benefits according to productivity, bonus payments for those with better performance. We are going through the morphology of work under the logic of globalized capital, as we announced earlier.

¹⁶ “O magistério também oferece férias longas, benefícios de saúde e aposentadoria relativamente generosos e uma jornada e trabalho oficial curta e ‘favorável à família’”

Seki *et al.* (2017) point to the more contemporary trend of replacing the way of hiring teachers: the hiring of temporary teachers who have only one employment contract with the State. As the end of public tenders would generate great repercussion and resistance in the region, which is not interesting for the production of consensus, this contracting format has been quite representative in Brazil. For the authors, hiring temporary teachers meets international recommendations, puts teachers under private logic and exposes them to job insecurity (SEKI *et al.*, 2017).

Part of this logic is flexibility, intensification, deregulation, competitiveness, demands, accountability, loss of autonomy, illness, loss of the collective sense of work. In 2015, 34% of temporary teachers attended basic education classes in 8 Brazilian states, a number higher than that regulated by Brazilian legislation (SEKI *et al.*, 2017), demonstrating that this is a growing trend in the country. These figures, in absolute numbers, affect 41% of all teachers working in Brazilian public education (this means almost one million teachers in informal and precarious work).

In the case of only the public state network, Alagoas had the highest percentage, 83% in 2015. Espírito Santo occupied the second position, 64%, in 2011, to 71%, in 2015. Piauí, in the same period, jumped from 42% to 63%. Mato Grosso do Sul, in the fourth position, kept the percentage of temporary workers, from 58% in 2011, to 60% in 2015. Minas Gerais, in the fifth place, had variations in the analyzed period, from 25%, in 2011, to 11%, in 2013, and 55%, in 2015. Rio de Janeiro (3%), Sergipe (3%), Pará (12%) and São Paulo (13%) are the states with the lowest percentage of temporary workers in 2015 (SEKI *et al.*, 2017, p. 947).¹⁷

These figures show a very harsh reality in the working conditions of temporary teachers, coerced to work in conditions that are much worse than those competing, facing instability, deregulation of labor laws, taking classes in several schools, working up to 60 hours a week, earning lower salaries, since they do not receive vacation extras (since during these periods their contracts are interrupted). It is necessary, in this scenario of increasing the precariousness of work, to understand that these temporary teachers have become permanent and, with them, the logic of changing the morphology of work, which represents the fundamentals of the

¹⁷ Em se tratando apenas da rede estadual pública, Alagoas contou com o maior percentual, 83% no ano de 2015. O Espírito Santo ocupou a segunda posição, 64%, em 2011, para 71%, em 2015. O Piauí, no mesmo período, pulou de 42% para 63%. O Mato Grosso do Sul, na quarta posição, manteve estável o percentual de temporários, de 58%, em 2011, passou para 60% em 2015. Minas Gerais, no quinto lugar, teve variações no período analisado, de 25%, em 2011, para 11%, em 2013, e 55%, em 2015. Rio de Janeiro (3%), Sergipe (3%), Pará (12%) e São Paulo (13%) são os estados com os menores percentuais de temporários em 2015 (SEKI *et al.*, 2017, p. 947).

globalization of capital and aims, as we present, to expand the profit. Even if it means setbacks in the field of labor rights and labor regulation.

As we have already mentioned, another important trend in the world of work is the growth of the infoproletariat; in this category of new workers we witness the strength of financial capital and its discourse of modernization of labor relations with crystal clear evidence. This new proletariat is inserted in much more exploitative and, therefore, degrading work relations. The expansion of capitalism means, in this order, the production of more workers capable of producing surplus value and of unemployed (FONTES, 2017).

Labor relations are undergoing profound changes due to the implementation of technological devices that aim to keep the remainder in opposition to the employees. Competition is generated between workers to achieve the dream of formal employment and, in the meantime, thousands of workers enter the sphere of “employability” in different ways (even if the job itself as we know it in its current form fails to mediate the relationship between capital and labor). The implementation of new technologies, such as activities unrelated to the human being, therefore, for him strange, generates an apparently contradictory phenomenon, but which deals with the essence of capital in this phase of its development: more work and less jobs are produced.

In the last decade (2010-2020), new labor relations expose the contradictions experienced by workers in the search for employability and, mainly, the launch of digital platforms that “employ” those left over whose opportunities were denied in the formality of capitalist work. In this new phase, we are experiencing the subordination of workers to capital beyond employment (FONTES, 2017). These labor relations, according to Fontes (2017), are named after the company that currently symbolizes the form of expropriation without the mediation of employment: the uberization of labor relations (in reference to the Uber company).

Consolidated as one of the main companies in the industry, Uber often amplifies the employee's expropriation capacity, not guaranteeing any rights (except to work more and more), without a defined working day, rest days, formal employment contract. Their workers do not see themselves in this way, but as service providers, some of them doing “jobs” to supplement family income.

The uberization process of labor relations has already reached other sectors, including teachers. A quick search on the Internet reveals several applications that teachers can download on their cell phones, register and wait for a call for possible class replacements. In general it works as follows: the teacher registers and waits for a call from schools in the region where he

resides (but it can also be from other regions through distance learning). In turn, the principals of the schools, as users of the programs, set out in search of the services offered.

In this case, if a teacher is unexpectedly absent, the application is activated and a teacher is called to replace him. This teacher has a deadline to answer the call and arrive at the school. If one of these deadlines is not met, another call is made until the vacancy is filled for that period. Another possibility is the scheduled call, for when the school management already knows that the teacher will be absent on a certain day. In this case, the substitute teacher is scheduled to come. The amounts paid are the same as the school units pay for their teachers, but it is possible to make a filter and choose the lowest possible value (only with graduation, specialization, master's and doctorate). It is also possible to hire teachers who work in Reverse Distance Education, when students are at school and the teacher is at a distance.

All of these hiring variables expose the reality that teachers currently experience, from real subsumption to degrading conditions, expropriating work. These teachers are available to the application, they do not have regular work breaks, much less are paid for commuting to school or have their labor rights guaranteed. Like temporary teachers, they face the precariousness of the new morphology of work.

The political challenge in mediating between policy implementation and implementation

Before presenting elements about the political challenges faced by teachers, we would like to clarify that, among the multiple possibilities, we are dealing here with politics as an action that starts from the superstructure of society and reaches the locus of the practice mediated by antagonistic conflicts in around the same action. In addition, we understand that politics is characterized by two inseparable elements that constitute its praxis: theory and practice, one linked to political society and the other in the field of material relations of its implementation.

As in our specific case we are concerned with educational policy, it is relevant to recover at first the problem between theory and practice, which does not only revolve around issues strictly linked to the making of the school. This concern also concerns the complexity of the political challenges of public education from the point of view of those who suffer directly from the implementation of reductionist policies, which has been the hallmark of the State, especially since the 1990s.

A quick analysis of political action in its various forming moments, that is, from the State to the material basis of society, allows us to highlight an apparent separation between

practice, understood as the daily activity of school subjects, which often escapes from more refined reflection, and the legal regulations arising from the State. In reality, teaching practice is guided by political concepts and definitions that regulate it, while at the same time providing policy, in its general sense, with indications of human needs that need to be regulated in the context of education, it must be said with reservations, for the general good of society. Therefore, the fact that the majority of our teaching actions are regulated by proclamations in the form of educational policies can lead us to the false observation that any possibility of struggle around the implementation of such policies becomes innocuous, leaving to teachers only, “mere executors”, their acceptance.

The State's political actions are not implemented immediately, as it is up to it to propose actions that end up causing an unstable balance with regard to meeting social demands. In this sense, it is necessary to consider that the State is not constituted as an entity in itself, but, due to its procedural and contradictory character. This movement would take place from the understanding that the actions of the State are characterized by a double role: at the same time that they are instruments of control of the social, they operate a certain type of treatment to the complaints that materialize by the inexorable inequality of society.

In this correlation of unequal forces, policies, while being strategic for the State, can express tactical spaces for the great part of society that suffers from the unequal distribution of wealth, which, despite the fact that they were produced collectively, are appropriated by an increasingly small number of people. Knowledge is one of these riches, which results in contradictory appropriation in an increasingly private way, despite the fact that it was produced collectively. Therefore, if the State's theoretical support base, which does not differ from its total configuration, points to conservation, maintenance and naturalization, the practice, on the other hand, must impel us to change and contest.

Thus, it is necessary to recover the validity of the struggle around the State's own political actions as a way of tensioning it towards the exacerbation of its class character. The problem is that, maintaining this state structure, processes of reformulation of the role that the State plays for the maintenance of society are implemented from time to time and, for the theme of our discussions in this article, it is necessary to remember the process of refitting or counter-reform of the State experienced, in the Brazilian case, from the 1990s.

In this specific case, the State is placing itself in an increasingly restrictive manner with regard to its financial contribution, at the same time that it looms large in its restrictive and controlling regulatory role. This process marks a conjuncture that pushes the subjects of education, individualized in their practices, in the search for atomized solutions in order to

respond to the departure from the State in its aspect of promotion, as we have already mentioned in the form of “entrepreneurial” teachers; subcontractors; outsourced. Therefore, the educational policy that is intended is not a mere theoretical component of its actions, it constitutes one of the most important mechanisms that fulfill the dual function of controlling the educational practice of society, at the same time that it materializes in the absence of the State in regards the financing of these same policies.

We can cite, just as one of the countless examples, the large-scale external evaluation process that leads public schools today to “chase” scores, since educational policy links an index¹⁸ to the process of financing and educational management, disputing often for temporary premiums that do not guarantee and do not provide security in order to maintain these relative gains. In a process of blaming, the subjects that make up the school environment are pitted against each other, which makes it difficult to jointly reflect on the challenges of public education.

In this direction is the broader movement of proposing the so-called “effective schools”, which promotes, among other measures, the teachers 'self-responsibility for the students' performance, through the incorporation of a new rationality to guide their practices, concretizing the management by results (SANTOS, 2012). In Latin American terms, this same example of evaluations can be taken in Chile in a contradictory way: the evaluations generated blame, formation focused on the tests, and not on what would really be necessary to teach, but, at the same time, it generated counter-hegemonic actions through *Alto al Simce*¹⁹ (IZUNZA; CAMPOS, 2016).

Given the distance from the State, schools tend to adopt strategies around achieving scores, a condition that guarantees their “survival”, often disregarding the performance of the function that should be the guiding principle of school work, namely: consistent socialization of knowledge elaborated historically and collectively. These elements are increasingly decided from the outside into the school space as a result of a determined relationship between the theoretical aspects of politics and the practice around such aspects, demarcating that the decision-making field is external to the field of teaching action. To a large extent, teachers

They are workers who do not fully identify themselves as such, due to their heritage and tradition, who see teaching as a vocation and priesthood. The identification as workers send them to the economically determined condition

¹⁸ We are referring to the Basic Education Development Index - IDEB, in the case of Brazil.

¹⁹ *Alto al Simce* is a movement of teachers, students, academics and politicians from Chile that gains great proportions with the purpose of stopping the unrestrained growth of external evaluations in that country. According to its website, the movement aims to implement a new education, free from market interference.

that they are inserted in objective relations and are hired to carry out their activities along a day, in a subordinate manner, receive a salary and that more value is taken from their work. Such identification is subject to strong resistance, possibly for removing these workers from their traditional place. On the other hand, identity as professionals does not exactly meet the desired recognition. Teachers are generally civil servants or employees of private institutions that increasingly work subject to external guidelines and controls (OLIVEIRA, 2008, p. 31).²⁰

When referring to the treatment that has been given to educational policies in the throes of the 1990s onwards, it is that underlying the implementation of these policies there is a flow of formulations, of slogans that support them, try to explain them and the justify. These "magic words" contain concepts from the most varied strands of thought that are proposed scientifically, starting from the economic field *stricto sensu*, at other times even from biology, such as: efficiency, effectiveness, clientele, product, productivity, ranking, empowerment, entrepreneurship and others. Because, "they express not only guidelines for education, but articulate interests, design policies, produce social interventions"²¹ (EVANGELISTA, 2009, p. 2). Such phraseology is imported in a "consecrated" way and makes up not only the speeches and policies of international or multilateral organizations, but they enjoy a growing endogenous adhesion in the implementation of public policies.

Political participation

When we turn to the Greek philosopher Aristotle (1999), we find the definition that man is a political animal, insofar as he gathers conditions to live and develop in the polis. Therefore, trying to reappropriate the concept for the present day, we question ourselves about the form and content of the politicization necessary for men to live and live in the *polis* (today understood as the city) with all the limitations that derive from it, as well as that correspond to the limited concept of Aristotelian polis. Currently, man as a political animal comes down to constituting himself as a citizen, a man full of duties and being able to have access to rights, more often than not subjective.

²⁰ São trabalhadores que não se identificam plenamente como tal, pela herança e tradição, que vêem o magistério sob o prisma da vocação e do sacerdócio. A identificação como trabalhadores os remetem à condição economicamente determinada de que estão inseridos em relações objetivas e são contratados para executarem suas atividades ao longo de uma jornada, de forma subordinada, recebem um salário e que do seu trabalho é retirado mais valor. Tal identificação é objeto de fortes resistências, possivelmente por retirar esses trabalhadores do seu lugar tradicional. Por outro lado, a identidade como profissionais tampouco atende exatamente ao reconhecimento desejado. Os professores são em geral funcionários públicos ou empregados de instituições privadas que cada vez mais trabalham submetidos a orientações e controles externos (OLIVEIRA, 2008, p. 31).

²¹ "expressam não apenas diretrizes para a educação, mas articulam interesses, projetam políticas, produzem intervenções sociais"

Paradoxically, the locus of the defense of corporate and categorical interests that historically constituted a barrier of containment to the overwhelming movement of capital over workers' rights ends up promoting a gradual emptying of the class struggle. We are referring now to the struggle of a broader nature, between workers and bourgeois, as more and more workers who are employed in the formal market recognize themselves for belonging to certain particular categories and end up not recognizing themselves as members of a single social class.

In this sense, we find the very difficulty of teachers, at different levels and spheres of education, in perceiving themselves as working class. The impression this gives is that each category is part of an independent collective, located in an “ethereal zone” and removed from the material issues at the base of society. The interests of workers, mostly corporate, are often defended by co-opted union centrals, sometimes by the state, sometimes by the incessant movement of the capitalist market, which labels everything and insists on everything for price²².

We consider it pertinent to emphasize that, despite the internal differences of each country, almost all of Latin America faces a similarity scenario in the early 90's, and one of these agglutinating points:

[...] it was the position of the unions before the reform agenda installed at the beginning of the 90's in the region. Despite the differences between countries, economic stabilization and the ideological and political hegemony of neoliberalism made it possible to install a series of reforms that produced tensions with teaching organizations. The most controversial themes are the deconcentration of employment, labor flexibility, the participation of the community in the administration of school centers and the proposals to evaluate teaching performance (GINDIN, 2009, p. 2).²³

Druck (2006), referring to the period that follows after the 1990s and that is accentuated in the 2000s, highlights that:

Thus, a process of increasing depoliticization of the unions was observed, expressed, essentially, in the inability to proceed with political proposals with an offensive content and, mainly, pointing an independent path for the working class. To this extent, the unions became an end in themselves, and as such, they acted, more and more, within the legality of capital, ceasing to be a means to constitute a legality proper to the working class and that fed the

²² Take as an example the silence of the non-innocent of some union centrals, previously seen as combative, about the dismantling of rights won by the working class while waiting for an electoral dawn that was built around the general election election of 2018, in which many of the centrals still maintained the hope of renewing the candidate most aligned with their interests to the presidency of the Republic in Brazil.

²³ [...] foi a posição dos sindicatos perante a agenda de reformas instalada a começos da década de 90 na região. Em que pese às diferenças entre os países, a estabilização econômica e a hegemonia ideológica e política do neoliberalismo possibilitaram instalar uma série de reformas que produziu tensões com as organizações docentes. os temas mais controvertidos forma a desconcentração do emprego, a flexibilização trabalhista, a participação da comunidade na administração dos centros escolares e as propostas de avaliar o desempenho docente (GINDIN, 2009, p. 2).

construction of an alternative political project to neoliberal hegemony (DRUCK, 2006, p. 330).²⁴

The challenge arises precisely because, in the past, many achievements by workers were the result of the collective work of autonomous union leaders, formerly committed, or more committed to the interests of their representatives. What is not confirmed today in the Brazilian case, because,

Since Lula's election in 2002, the relationship between Brazilian unionism and the state apparatus has changed radically. It never hurts to recall some facts. First, Lula da Silva's administration filled approximately half of the senior management and advisory positions - about 1,300 vacancies in total - with union members who came to control an annual budget of over R \$ 200 billion. In addition, strategic positions relating to state-owned companies' pension funds were held by union leaders. Several of these have taken on highly prestigious positions in state-owned companies - such as Petrobras and Furnas Electrical Central - in addition to serving on the administrative board of the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES). The Lula government also promoted a union reform that made Brazilian union centrals official, increasing the union tax and transferring approximately R \$ 100 million annually to these organizations (SOARES, 2013, p. 553).²⁵

Still in line with union transformism²⁶ in recent years in Brazil, narcissism on the part of various union leaderships, travel, contacts with sectors and influential subjects of the Brazilian government, build a plastered hierarchy that overshadows the interest of union leaders

²⁴ Observou-se, assim, um processo de despolitização crescente dos sindicatos, expresso, essencialmente, na incapacidade de avançar com propostas políticas de conteúdo ofensivo e que, principalmente, apontassem um caminho independente para a classe trabalhadora. Nesta medida, os sindicatos se transformaram num fim em si mesmo, e como tal, atuaram, cada vez mais, dentro da legalidade do capital, deixando de ser um meio para constituir uma legalidade própria da classe trabalhadora e que alimentasse a construção de um projeto político alternativo à hegemonia neoliberal (DRUCK, 2006, p. 330).

²⁵ Desde a eleição de Lula, em 2002, a relação do sindicalismo brasileiro com o aparelho de Estado modificou-se radicalmente. Nunca é demais lembrar alguns fatos. Em primeiro lugar, a administração de Lula da Silva preencheu aproximadamente metade dos cargos superiores de direção e assessoramento – cerca de 1.300 vagas, no total – com sindicalistas que passaram a controlar um orçamento anual superior a R\$ 200 bilhões. Além disso, posições estratégicas relativas aos fundos de pensão das empresas estatais foram ocupadas por dirigentes sindicais. Vários destes assumiram cargos de grande prestígio em companhias estatais – como, por exemplo, a Petrobras e Furnas Centrais Elétricas –, além de integrarem o conselho administrativo do Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social (BNDES). O governo Lula promoveu, ainda, uma reforma sindical que oficializou as centrais sindicais brasileiras, aumentando o imposto sindical e transferindo anualmente cerca de R\$ 100 milhões para estas organizações (SOARES, 2013, p. 553).

²⁶ We adopted the Gramscian category of transformism here, even though it was referring to the Italian conditions of post 1870, treating them as a “passive revolution”. We are interested in demarcating the co-option exercised by the hegemonic political movement, not only of intellectuals, but also of union activists. It is worth remembering that in that context, Gramsci stated: “All Italian politics, from 1870 until today, is characterized by transformism, that is, by the elaboration of a ruling class in the frameworks established by moderates after 1848, through the absorption of the active elements arising from allied and enemy classes. Political leadership becomes an aspect of dominance, insofar as the absorption of enemy class elites leads to their beheading and impotence” (GRAMSCI, 2002, p. 62-63).

who are often engaged in sterile internal struggles with regard to the achievements by workers, always remembering the tactical character that such achievements should have.

This tonic remained constant during the other administrations of the Workers' Party in the Presidency of the Republic in Brazil, whose most striking mark can be pointed out by the process of depoliticizing the unions. Materialized not only in cooptation, but in the inertia in advancing with political proposals that faced the neoliberal hegemony and that could minimally express the desires of the working class.

From the radicalization of democracy to the seal of the State's counter-reforms demanded by capital, the reforms, understood and justified as a general interest, were assumed by the party, the government and its base as its demands. However, when the PT arrived at the Presidency of the Republic, its tactical option, until the end of the 1980s, was confused as a political strategy, culminating in a continued desire to accumulate “strength within the democratic and popular field”, which ended up hegemonizing the social, union and popular movements, “within the institutional spaces” administered by the party, in such a way that the need for theoretical formulation was lost sight of, with which it could adequately reproduce the concrete movement of reality (IASI, 2012a, p 311) (SANTOS, 2020, p. 91).²⁷

In the specific case of the teaching union movement with regard to the form of political association in defense of the public school and in the broader debate on educational policies,

[...] it was not possible to observe major changes in union action, due to its relationship with the Lula government. The corporate agenda remained strong and the intervention with educational policy issues continued within a dialogue with other social movements that make up the educational field. There is no evidence that this specific characteristic of the teaching movement has guided its performance differently in relation to a government of union origin (ARAÚJO; OLIVEIRA, 2014, p. 300).²⁸

The ailments of the scarce teacher union organization, as it is often the main locus of appropriation and discussion of the broader political transformations, resulting from a process of transformation as well, negatively implies the teachers' capacity and even voluntary

²⁷ Da radicalização da democracia à chancela das contrarreformas do Estado exigidas pelo capital, as reformas, entendidas e justificadas como interesse geral, foram assumidas pelo partido, pelo governo e por parte de sua base como sendo suas demandas. Entretanto, quando da chegada do PT à Presidência da República, sua opção tática, até o final dos anos 1980, foi confundida como estratégia política, culminando com um continuum desejo de acumulação de “força dentro do campo democrático e popular”, que acabou por hegemonizar os movimentos sociais, sindicais e populares, “dentro dos espaços institucionais” administrados pelo partido, de tal forma que se perdeu de vista a necessidade de formulação teórica, com a qual pudesse reproduzir adequadamente ao movimento concreto da realidade (IASI, 2012a, p. 311) (SANTOS, 2020, p. 91).

²⁸ [...] não foi possível observar grandes transformações da ação sindical, em função de sua relação com o governo Lula. A pauta corporativa permaneceu forte e a intervenção junto às questões de políticas educacionais continuou no interior de uma interlocução com outros movimentos sociais que compõem o campo educacional. Não há evidências de que esta característica específica do movimento docente tenha pautado diferentemente sua atuação em relação a um governo de origem sindical (ARAÚJO; OLIVEIRA, 2014, p. 300).

association. This in itself puts us in need of detachment from the immediate interests of the decisive issues that permeate the teaching career because it is a part of the great social contingent formed by all workers.

Final considerations

So many challenges, added to the specificities and characteristics that involve education in the different countries of Latin America, need to be reflected and combated on a daily basis, as they arise in the most diverse ways and on various fronts. Regarding the social aspects of teaching work, we try to draw an overview of the challenges faced by teachers in all education systems, but we are aware, as we have already warned, that we are not exhausting the possibilities here. Such challenges are the result of policies, programs, laws, guidelines, national and international guidelines so that the education of countries in the region reaches the level of appropriate and desired competitiveness in the face of the globalization movement.

These are general actions and proposals that, despite the degree of importance that each one has, we have not been able to scrutinize by unveiling their “goals and strategies”. However, we consider it pertinent to highlight the multiplicity of obstacles that we face to achieve our initial purpose: to defend an omnilateral human formation that allows the appropriation of the most developed human objectifications in the search for the realization of the human race in each singular individual (SAVIANI, 2013), through of intentional and direct pedagogical action interspersed with the objective conditions of society and class struggle.

In this context, we understand that it is essential to understand the different forms of control and attack on the autonomy of educational work and the democraformation. This presupposes the need for the formation of class consciousness among teachers throughout Latin America, so that we can strengthen the fight against hegemony, through unions and daily confrontations in pedagogical practice. It is urgent, then, to establish a political position that is contrary to this movement that materializes in the actions emanating from the State, understanding its theoretical prerogatives, questioning them, unveiling their intentionality and, why not, fighting against the impositions that are guiding the practice in the field of contradiction in which they are reproduced.

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