



# **Precariousness of labor: the function of professional education**

*Precarização do trabalho: a funcionalidade da educação profissional*

*Precarización del trabajo: la funcionalidad de la educación profesional*

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## **Abstract**

Taking into account the growing number of public policies on professional qualification concerning youth, we present the results of a research whose target was to analyze the ways of integration Brazilian youngsters in work market. Having as a methodological strategy the analyze of professional qualification political programs and data analyze published by the Work Ministry and the Inter-tradeunionist of Statistics and Socioeconomical Studies (Dieese) and having as theoretical approach the literature on Brazilian work market and the youth policies,

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it is argued that public professional qualification policies, particularly the youth oriented ones, deepened in Lula's and kept on in Dilma's government, once based on the development of labor competencies aiming at both strengthening employability and forming entrepreneurs, reinforces meritocratic ideologies as well as individualizes the way of coping with problems related to unemployment, therefore, exempts the State from its social and political responsibility to cope with capitalism unstructured logic. We have concluded that such policy is directly articulated with bad public school quality and compose a functional bloc with the capital Precarização do trabalho reproduction process and intensification of worker exploitation; aiming, basically, subjective and technical adjustment of labor force to precarious job positions.

**Keywords:** Professional qualification. Precariousness of labor. Unemployment.

### **Resumo**

*Considerando o crescente número de políticas públicas de qualificação profissional voltadas para a juventude, apresentam-se os resultados de uma pesquisa cujo objetivo foi analisar a forma de inserção da juventude brasileira no mercado de trabalho. Tendo como movimento metodológico a análise dos programas públicos de qualificação profissional e a análise de dados apresentados pelo Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego e do Departamento Intersindical de Estatística e de Estudos Socioeconômicos (Dieese) e, tendo como aporte teórico a literatura que discute o mercado de trabalho brasileiro e as políticas de juventude, defende-se que as políticas públicas de qualificação profissional, particularmente as voltadas para a juventude, ampliadas no mandato do presidente Lula e continuadas no governo Dilma, ao pautarem-se pelo desenvolvimento de competências laborais, pelo fortalecimento da empregabilidade e pelo objetivo de formar sujeitos empreendedores, reforçam a ideologia da meritocracia, bem como individualizam o enfrentamento ao problema do desemprego, retirando do Estado o compromisso social e político de enfrentamento à lógica desestruturante do capital. Conclui-se que essas políticas articulam-se diretamente à má qualidade da escola pública e convertem-se em instrumentos funcionais ao processo de reprodução do capital e de acirramento dos processos de exploração dos trabalhadores, direcionando-se basicamente à formação de uma mão de obra capaz de adequar-se subjetiva e tecnicamente a postos de trabalho precarizados.*

**Palavras-chave:** Qualificação profissional. Precarização do trabalho. Desemprego.

## Resumen

*Considerando el creciente número de políticas públicas de cualificación profesional dirigidas a la juventud, se presentan los resultados de una investigación cuyo objetivo fue analizar la manera de inserción de la juventud brasileña en el mercado de trabajo. Teniendo como movimiento metodológico el análisis de los programas públicos de cualificación profesional y el análisis de datos presentados por el ministerio del trabajo y empleo y del Departamento Intersindical de Estadística y de Estudios Socioeconómicos (Dieese) y teniendo como aporte teórico la literatura que discute el mercado de trabajo brasileño y las políticas para la juventud, se defiende que las políticas públicas de cualificación profesional, notadamente las dirigidas para la juventud, ampliadas en el gobierno del presidente Lula y continuadas en el gobierno Dilma, al presentaren como eje el desarrollo de competencias laborales, el fortalecimiento de la capacidad de conseguir un trabajo y el objetivo de formar sujetos emprendedores, refuerzan la ideología de la meritocracia, así como individualizan el enfrentamiento al problema del paro, quitando del Estado el compromiso social y político de enfrentamiento a la lógica desestructurante del capital. Se puede concluir que estas políticas se relacionan directamente a la mala calidad de la escuela pública y componen un bloque funcional al proceso de reproducción del capital e de fortalecimiento de los procesos de explotación de los trabajadores, dirigiéndose básicamente a la formación de una mano de obra capaz de adecuarse subjetiva y técnicamente a los trabajos precarizados.*

**Palabras Clave:** *Cualificación profesional. Precarización del trabajo. Paro.*

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## Introduction

Brazil and practically all the Latin-American nations have implemented reforms in their education systems or professional qualification activities, with the aim of adapting the same to the demands which have arisen from patronage (OLIVEIRA, 2010a). It should be stressed to what extent these measures, combined with the process of economic globalization and increased competition, have taken over the teaching of

skills as the flagship of their training processes, creating a consensus in the field of vocational training similar to that of the field of economics (GENTILI, 1998). The Latin-American nations have implemented similar projects in their education plans, leading us to question to what extent their educational policies were structured independently. It seems to us that they are subordinate to external factors, particularly to the specifications of multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (OLIVEIRA, 2006).

The dwindling number of jobs created has resulted in the hegemonic discourse in defense of the employability of workers. Even highlighting the importance of school education as a fundamental part of the development of human capital, everyone is aware that school certification is no guarantee of employment, principally in sectors with low levels of schooling or regarded as not having the abilities, skills and knowledge required by the labor market.

According to the corporate elite, government agents and multilateral agencies, the poor quality of existing labor is due to the weaknesses of the state school system and professional qualification practices, rather than being seen as arising from the historic process of economic exploitation (INSTITUTO HERBERT LEVY, 1992). Hence, cause becomes consequence, as Frigotto (1989) pointed out on conducting a scathing criticism of the theory of human capital.

This theory, in addition to its current forms of expression, masks the fact of the historical subaltern movements (political, economic and cultural) experienced by many nations, having generated elements which prevented the training of more qualified workers to face up to the challenges posed by the transformations arising from the restructuring of capitalist production. The poorer nations register educational indicators which are well beyond those regarded as essential for a domestic economy to vie for a better position in global competition.

The manner in which each nation participates in the international division of labor will determine the need and relevance for the existence of a greater stock of qualified labor for the production of goods with

greater added value. The process for the training of human capital is not responsible for this inclusion in the first instance, and far less is inclusion as a protagonist created by disregarding relations of power restricting the manner in which certain domestic economies participate in the capital globalization process (CHESNAIS, 1996).

As Pochmann (2001) emphasized, corporations have moved their productive capacity around the world with a view to increasing their levels of accrual. However, this process does not entail the transfer of activities of greater industrial complexity to the poorer nations. Far less is the wealth snapped up by the capital broken down and channeled to satisfy the interests of the nations receiving this production. In practice, the capital maintains the concentration of wealth unaltered and establishes mechanisms to reinforce the economic and social inequalities which afflict the peripheral and semi-peripheral nations.

Using this entire scenario and assumptions as references, we will argue to what extent professional training practices, particularly those geared to young people, serve as a means of assuring workers conform to the logic of capital. Although such policies strive to justify themselves in the increased employability of workers and the promotion of entrepreneurial practices, they also become useful to capital due to playing an active role in training workers to fill positions.

We believe that public policies on professional qualification geared to the juvenile sectors in precarious economic conditions are directly connected with the poor quality of state schools, and comprise a capital reproduction process and an aggravation of processes involving the exploitation of workers.

We conducted a methodological survey of data contained in Workers' Yearbooks<sup>1</sup> produced by The Inter-Syndical Department of Statistics and Socio-Economic Studies [Departamento Intersindical de Estatística e Estudos Socioeconômicos – Dieese] and those disclosed by

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <<http://www.dieese.org.br/>>.

the Ministry of Labor and Employment to help us understand the movement to place young people in the employment market.

### **Employability, entrepreneurship and professional education**

As Antunes (2002) pointed out, a consequent analysis of unemployment, using the globalization of the economy and productive restructuring as a reference, should take the peculiarities of each domestic economy into consideration. Otherwise, we are disregarding factors which are essential to ascertaining the possibility of reversing an overall framework of unemployment, with specific situations in each nation.

Some of the data gathered by Pochmann (2001) helps us illustrate this statement. According to this author, although unemployment is a global phenomenon, it is most prevalent in the poorer nations.

It is a fact that in the last thirty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, between 1975 and 1999, unemployment rose by 53% around most of the world, whereas this figure amounted to 200% in the poorer nations. The number of unemployed in this same period rose by 85% in developed countries and by 390% in underdeveloped countries.

This situation led to a significant alteration in the geographic distribution of the unemployed. In 1975, the developed countries accounted for 41% of the total number of unemployed in the world, and this share had dropped to 20% by 1979. On the other hand, the underdeveloped countries accounted for 59% and 79.4% of the unemployed respectively.

This data, although in need of chronological updating, illustrates the fact that unemployment is heterogenic, feeding and further complicating the processes of subordination and economic dependence of many nations. Furthermore, this underlines the thesis that it is imperative to search for unique solutions or ways out which do not directly attack the main reasons for the dwindling number of jobs available.

The measures taken almost always reinforce unemployment and cover up to what extent the governments have been complicit and responsible for the perpetuation of this situation.

Neoliberal logic classifies unemployment as standard in a capitalist economy, in addition to using the same to diminish the strength of the trade union movement. As such, unemployment, according to businessmen, should not mobilize the state for the creation of social policies or structural reforms aimed at mitigating the social impacts of the same. As far as they are concerned, it is the State, in the absence of or lack of interest of private initiative, which should implement activities geared to improving the qualification of workers.

Practices of professional qualification are of a certain assistential nature, as they strive to give the individual only what is necessary to, perhaps, diminish his suffering. However, government policies in this field do not manage to reduce the situation of insecurity in which workers live. Insecurity, according to Frigotto (2001), of experiencing a continuous reduction in stability at work and being forced to be subjected to precarious work relations.

Behring (2001), based on Jorge Matoso, also highlights the insecurity of workers. His comment helps us, as does Frigotto (2001), to realize that capital actions aiming to increase their rate of accrual, such as the deregulation of the employment market, the reduction in the role of the State as a provider of social services, and, principally, the restructuring of the merchandise manufacturing process, subject workers to a continuous situation of emotional instability.

Within the scope of this scenario of insecurity, professional qualification policies, be they in the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government or the Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva government, became excuses for the development of labor skills and an increase in the employability of workers. They established a relationship of independence between access, permanence and the quality of schools in relation to conditions of social inequality. Conditions which were responsible for Brazil registering a schooling level well below that regarded, in accordance with the discourse of the

business community (OLIVEIRA, 2005), as the minimum necessary for a nation to satisfactorily meet the challenges of economic competitiveness.

Hence, the public policies of professional qualification ended up increasingly training manpower for precarious jobs. Or, as Maria Ciavatta Franco (1999) pointed out some time ago, train manpower for uncertain work.

As Oliveira (2010b) pointed out, the guiding assumptions of professional education “shield” the State from criticism in relation to its incompetence and collusion with regard to the lack of effective action for the generation of jobs and a radical reduction in poverty.

This fact underlines the viewpoint of advocates of the ideology of the meritocracy and the individualization of the social condition.

### **Professional education x job insecurity**

An analysis of public qualification policies (Planfor, PNQ etc.)<sup>2</sup> reveals the fact that they most directly involve the sectors of society included in the employment market in one of the different precarious forms imposed by the logic of capitalist accrual. Young people have also been chosen a target audience.

Some policies geared to young people in the Lula government contained the issue of professional qualification as one of their structural axes. Within the governmental scope, the problem of youth is still

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<sup>2</sup> National Professional Training Plan [Plano Nacional de Formação Profissional – Planfor] represented the series of activities developed as of 1995 by the then Ministry of Labor (the current *Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego* – MTE) aiming to guarantee, in the form of an activity managed at national level, an increase in the competitiveness of domestic industry and to enable unemployed workers or those at risk of social exclusion to take part in professional qualification activities which would enable them to remain in or return to the employment market. The initial target was to train 15 million workers per annum, representing around 20% of the economically active population in Brazil (BRASIL, 1998). In 2003, on the extinction of the same, the National Qualification Plan [Plano Nacional de Qualificação – PNQ] was created, which provided the guidelines of the national qualification policy.



regarded from a standpoint of economic inclusion. In other words, violence, inclusion in the world of drug trafficking, evils which afflict young people, may be fought when young people have access to some kind of system which ensures their inclusion in the employment market.

The reality seems to demonstrate that it is not sufficient to implement professional qualification policies or policies geared to the generation of income in order to reduce, in the most systematic manner possible, unemployment amongst the young or to put an end to conditions of poverty, persistent for a part of the Brazilian people. Although these policies are essential, they need to be streamlined. The evils which affect young people are the same by means of which the condition of poverty is reproduced.

Furthermore, although we are used to talking about unemployment among young people, the truth is that young people — often prematurely — are involved in the employment market. We witness the continuity of young people searching for a job at an early age, even when joining the employment market means sacrificing the conclusion of secondary education. It is never too late to point out that in accordance with PNAD – 2010, 46.7% of young people of between 18 and 24 years of age were not studying, but working, and 33.3% of young people in the same age group left school without having concluded secondary education (IBGE, 2010).

Young people from 15 to 24 years of age represent a population of over 33 million. Around 23 million (69%) of this group are part of the economically active population (DIEESE, 2011b). Or in other words, they are either working or unemployed.

Among young people from 15 to 17 years of age, the ideal age for studying secondary education, we registered around 4.3 million young people as part of the economically active population, representing approximately 42% of all people in this age group. Attendance in secondary education is a mere 50.9% (IBGE, 2010), meaning that the presence of young people from this age group in the employment market, combined with failed exams and truancy — the latter of which is also associated

with starting a job — are issues to be addressed in order to guarantee young people conclude secondary education at the ideal age.

Although economic conditions and a certain culture lead to young people joining the employment market, we believe this occurs too early and in precarious conditions.

Young people are the hardest hit by the problem of unemployment. Taking into account the age groups with the most systematic action for searching for a job, the level of unemployment is highest in the group closest to studying secondary education. According to data published by DIEESE (2011c) for the year 2009, the national unemployment rate among 15 to 19 year olds stood at 22.9%, twice that of the 25 to 29 years of age group and three times greater than the 30 to 39 years of age group. We have quoted these examples, however the disparity is even greater when compared to other age groups.

When we analyze more specific data for the 15 to 17 year-old age group, when we can see the situation of unemployment is far more serious. These young people are looking for a job. The case of the Distrito Federal was the most problematic among the areas surveyed by the IBGE. The unemployment rate for young people in this age group reached almost 65% in 2010. Of the other major cities surveyed, Recife, Sao Paulo, Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte, Salvador, Recife and Fortaleza, only Fortaleza and Porto Alegre registered a percentage of less than 40%: 28.2% and 30.2% respectively.

Some of the programs geared to young people in the Lula government and maintained by President Dilma address the issue of professional qualification/education as the main theme. The most noteworthy of which are: *ProJovem*, *Agente Jovem*, *Saberes da Terra*, *Consortio Social da Juventude*, *Escola de Fábrica*, *Primeiro Emprego*, *Soldado Cidadao* and *Proeja*, and more recently, *Pronatec*.

The diversity of programs and the prevalence of the understanding of education as instrumental in reducing poverty and social criminality illustrate that the structuring logic of government programs relating youth and “the world of work”, is the same as the loan agencies (the World

Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank) (OLIVEIRA, 2006). Or in other words, poverty is reversed due to an increase in schooling or public professional qualification actions.

The human capital theory seems to be the philosophical axis of the professional education programs and policies geared to young people.

Castro (2004) draws attention to the fact that, despite the complexity of the relationship between education and employment, it is illusory to establish a direct relationship between the population's level of schooling and the drop in unemployment rates. This illusion occurs due to fact this interpretation focuses on the activity of the employment market and disregards the return to jobs which occurred in the recent capitalist accrual process.

Pochmann (2008) stresses the extent of the impertinence of the overvalued discourse of education as a mechanism for containing high rates of unemployment. Using data in relation to the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a reference, the author emphasizes the "anomaly" of our employment market, as although there has been an increase in the schooling levels of the Brazilian population, the conditions to ensure people with higher levels of education are made full use of have not been created.

Contrary to global trends, which demand higher levels of schooling and greater professional qualification in order to combat unemployment, idleness in the workforce in Brazil has been increasing in the very sector of the population with most years of schooling: in 2004, 60.2% of the unemployed (8.3 million people) had completed basic education, while in 1995 only 37.7% of the total number of unemployed (4.5 million) had studied for up to eight years. Nevertheless, a major rise in schooling levels in practically all age groups has been registered. In 2004, for example, the Brazilian population averaged 6.6 years of schooling, against a mere 5.1 years in 1993. Or in other words, there was an increase of almost 30% in the number of years spent in education in the population as a whole (Pochmann, 2008, p. 39-40).

The latest data enables us to further illustrate and confirm Pochmann's declarations. According to the *Public Employment, Labor and*

*Income System Yearbook 2010/2011* (DIEESE, 2011a), in 2010 the National Employment System [Sistema Nacional de Emprego – Sine] offered job hunters slightly more than 2.5 million vacancies throughout Brazil. The requirements to fill these vacancies were not at all high, as 68.5% of the vacancies did not even require applicants to have concluded secondary education. Moreover, at the time of hiring workers provided by Sine, the selection process specified the use of 47.7% of workers who had completed secondary education, which when added to workers with a university degree rose to 49.8%. Or in other words, at the time of selection, in accordance with the provision of workers who had completed secondary education being greater than 50%, the employers could afford the luxury of demanding schooling levels far greater than that required by the activity to be performed, and stipulated by the employers themselves when applying to Sine.

The same document enables us to see that, despite talking about the need for better qualified workers due to the new demands imposed by the process of globalization and the restructuring of production, the occupations which generated most jobs do not require high levels of schooling, which is consistent with the profile of the vacancies offered by SINE (Table 1). According to this report, the main job-generating occupations and in which SINE managed to place most workers are: general services officer, farm laborer, telemarketing operator, construction laborer, cleaner, bricklayer, cashier, snack bar attendant, doorman, general services assistant, builder's mate, loaders and unloaders. The profile of these occupations does not justify the demand for higher levels of schooling or previous experience.

What we have is a greater supply of workers available with higher levels of schooling, enabling employers to establish new selection criteria at the time of hiring, as Marcio Pochmann (2008) pointed out.

Returning to the discussion on public professional qualification policies, whereby we do not intend to discuss government programs, we aim to highlight the fact that most of them are designed to enable the

sectors which have in some way or another been excluded from basic education to rejoin the education system. In other words, these programs lean clearly towards social inclusion, be it to guarantee the conclusion of basic education, basic qualifications or the provision of financial assistance. Basic or professional education is regarded as a mechanism which is capable of providing an individual with renewed social inclusion. We need to discuss the manner in which individuals are included in the market or society created by these programs.

The purpose of these programs is to change the situation of deteriorating social conditions experienced by these individuals, but the programs themselves promote precarious means of training. Although the programs aim at changing the social conditions of the young people attending the same, they reinforce the argument of the deterioration social conditions faced by most of the poorest members of the population.

**Table 1** - Comparison table of vacancies offered by Sine, enrollments with Sine, referrals and workers placed by Sine, in accordance with schooling (2010)

Schooling	Vacancies	Enrolled	Placed
Illiterate	18.9	0.7	0.9
Incomplete Basic 1	8.8	5.7	5.5
Complete Basic 1	6.1	4.9	5.0
Incomplete Basic 2	8.6	13.5	12.9
Complete Basic 2	18.5	9.1	11.1
Incomplete Secondary	7.6	16.1	14.8
Complete Secondary	30.1	39.5	42.7
Incomplete Higher	0.7	6.0	5.0
Complete Higher	0.6	4.6	2.1

Source: Adapted of DIEESE, 2011a

This argument is based on the fact that the programs geared to the qualification of young people failed to deal with the precarious training administered within the scope of basic education. Focusing on the aim of promoting pseudo professional training, was, in a certain way, acknowledgment of the fact it was impossible to enhance this qualification due to the fact the students did not have the basic knowledge required for this training to possess greater complexity. Furthermore, just as basic education has seen an emphasis on guaranteeing certification in detriment of ensuring better quality training, this has been one of the characteristics of professional qualification activities.

The case of PNQ is a good example of an activity which goes no further than a mere certification in detriment of the guarantee of professional qualification associated with general training. Hence the courses administered in 2007 had an average workload of only 200 hours (DIEESE, 2011c).

Criticism of this neglect of general training is not unwarranted. According to data published by DIEESE, around 50% of the economically active population in Brazil has completed basic education at the most, many of which are uneducated. Moreover, over 56% of those enrolled in the courses promoted by the PNQ had not completed secondary education.

The preference for more pragmatic training in detriment of more complex training is deliberate. Similar to other government programs, the minimum training required for these workers to join the employment market as a means of satisfying their capital needs for the execution of tasks which are simple, but fundamental in the general process of capitalist production and accrual of capital.

We believe it is pertinent to confirm the existence of a functional relationship for capital between the precarious state of basic education and professional qualification programs. In practice, the professional training and employment market plan specifies movement of exclusive inclusion, so well highlighted by Kuenzer (2007).

Low levels of schooling or so-called professional disqualification are expressions, and, at the same time, functional to a productive system and powered by social inequality. As Kuenzer underlined, an inclusive exclusion is created, as the poorest students continue being expelled from public schools, leaving them the alternative of joining government programs as a means of acquiring knowledge or certificates which enables them to enter the employment market.

The strategy by means of which knowledge is made available/denied, in accordance with the unequal and differentiated needs of the integral employment processes, is what we have been calling exclusive inclusion on the way out of school. Instead of the explicit denial of opportunities for continued quality education, there is an apparent availability of education opportunities in the form of multiple types and different natures characterized by their unequal character, and, mostly, merely certificatory, which do not guarantee mastery of the knowledge required to develop complex cognitive skills associated with intellectual, ethical and aesthetic independence (Kuenzer, 2007, p. 1167).

The manner of inclusion sponsored by these government courses and programs occurs largely in precarious jobs. They do not guarantee labor rights and in no way whatsoever enable these workers to enjoy social rights or access to material and non-material assets essential for a dignified life. This leads us to affirm that the current policies geared to the younger sectors reinforce the process of job insecurity.

The presence of insecure employment, contrary to the strong presence of technological artifacts in the merchandise production process or even the tertiary sector, has not proven to be in any way anomalous to flexible production or the traditional forms of employing manpower. On the contrary, the coexistence in the production chain of workers with profoundly different levels of training has proven to be extremely useful in the capital reproduction process. In truth, we may say that in Brazil,

contrary to the claims of the business sector, poor quality basic education has not hampered the increase in accrual rates.

Capital has not the slightest strength to reconsolidate degraded forms of the use of manpower, provided this can increase the extraction of added value and restore its accrual rates.

The inclusion of workers in the employment market is defined in terms of the interests and requirements of the employers. The qualification of the workers, albeit an important factor in the entry process, is not a determining factor. The pure and simple defense of the qualification policies and activities as a means of resolving the issue of unemployment ends up serving only to place the blame on the victims of the unemployment process and to hide the historical movement of capital to diminish its dependence in relation to the use of the workforce.

When in possession of the data in relation to the manner in which young people are included in the employment market, the aforementioned declarations make a little more sense.

According to the *Public Employment, Labor and Income System Yearbook 2010/2011*, the proportion of young people from 16 to 24 years of age with no signed labor card in relation to the total number of young people working in the same age group surpassed 37% in the year 2009. If we consider that over one-third of young people are employed with no signed labor card and 56.7% of those with basic education but who failed to conclude secondary education earn up to one minimum wage (DIEESE, 2011a), it is clear to see that young people who have not concluded secondary education represent a considerable part of extremely precarious manpower.

Another point worthy of note is the contingent of young people from 15 to 24 years of age who skip school. Around 17 million young people are in this situation. Some have not concluded primary education, and many, secondary education. We are interested in highlighting the fact that they are the target of federal government programs. According to the records of the *Projovem Trabalhador* program (DIEESE, 2011a), 63.1% of its participants were in the 18 to 24 years of age group. In 2009 (IBGE, 2010), for example, 46.7% of the young people in this age group were



working only. In other words, the young people who should be at university are forced to resort to such programs as a way out, as they delude themselves with the possibility of finding a job with a dignified salary and which complies with workers' rights.

Although unemployment levels have dropped in recent years, the number of young people looking for jobs in vain is still considerable. This figure is even more pronounced in the 16 to 17 years-of-age group, where this percentage registered over 43% in 2010. This data warns us of the fact that almost half of young people have turned to the employment market as a means of guaranteeing their sustenance and that of their families instead of concentrating on concluding basic education with a view to going on to public higher education.

There is a real dispute between the employment market and school. In many cases economic necessity comes in first place.

Table 2 provides a summary of the situation of young people in relation to the employment market in two major cities (Sao Paulo and Recife), and illustrates to what extent these young people end up leaving school when there is a greater supply of jobs. The example provided shows that the unemployment rate for the 18 to 24 years-of-age group in the city of Sao Paulo in 2010 was 20.5%, whereas this figure rises to 32.2% in Recife. As a result, the number of young people studying only was far higher in Recife, more than likely not due to having better schools, but to the existence of less job opportunities. Young people leaving school, caused by the poor quality of schools and the social and economic conditions of these individuals, are among the factors which push them towards the employment market prematurely.

Young people are not going to be employed at places which guarantee them workers' rights and a good salary. Quite the opposite. Not only will these rights be negotiated, but it will be made hard for them to continue their studies. The contingent of young people with no secondary education certificates attending quick and precarious courses regarded as a "magical way out" to improve their economic and social status increases on an annual basis.

**Tabela 2** - Situation of young people (16 to 24 years of age) in accordance with their situation of employment and study – Major Cities (2010)

Situation of employment and study	Recife (%)	São Paulo (%)
Studying only	26.5	13.9
Studying and working	19.4	24.5
Working only	39.3	51.6

Source: DIEESE, 2011d.

In an attempt to illustrate this argument we have referred to the data in relation to the working population in the year 2009. According to figures published by Dieese, of the total of 92.7 million people in work, 6.2 million were young people from 15 to 19 years of age and 11.04 million from 20 to 24 years of age, amounting to a total of 17.04 million working. This represents 18.7% of the total number of people in work.

Only half of young Brazilians were, and are, in some way or another, working or unemployed. This information fails to specify the type of job, as there is a great variety: employees with a signed labor card, members of the armed forces, civil servants, employees with no signed labor card, domestic workers, self-employed, etc. We believe a significant number of these young people, particularly those who have not concluded secondary education, go into precarious jobs. Drawing attention to the data in relation to formal jobs enables us to further prove our assumption.

According to Dieese, there were around 44 million formal jobs in Brazil in 2010, of which only 1% was held by young people of under 17 years of age and 17.1% by young people of between 18 and 24 years of age, representing a total of 18.1% of formal employment for people under 24 years of age. Converting this percentage into absolute numbers gives us the figure of around eight million young people. However, as demonstrated previously, around 17 million young people were working in 2009, meaning 9 million were/are employed informally.

Even though many of these young people have become successful self-employed workers, having opened their own businesses via entrepreneurship or any other possibility of guaranteeing income in a non-precarious manner, is it hard to reject the theory that a massively precarious use of this manpower exists in accordance with the interests of capital.

We would like to proceed with our argument by drawing attention to the fact that although informal work is practically synonymous with job insecurity, this does not mean the same does not occur in formal employment. In other words, a signed labor card is not a guarantee of appropriate working conditions. As such, I should highlight the fact that over 6% of formal workers earn less than one minimum salary and a little over 27% earn between one and one and a half minimum salaries. If these figures cause us dismay, as we are fully aware of the purchasing power of a minimum salary in Brazil, the fact that 30% of active workers earned less than one minimum salary in 2009 is even more astounding (DIEESE, 2011d). Perhaps, many of these workers are exactly the young people who have attended public professional qualification programs and who were excluded from public school at some point in time.

To conclude, we return to our theory that despite the current discourse for the need for workers with higher levels of qualification and schooling, a public school system which continues to disclose historically produced knowledge in an unfair manner has proven to be useful to capital.

We may summarize our viewpoint by claiming that the poor quality of basic education in Brazil and the profile of public policies geared to young people implemented ever since the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government and expanded during the Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva government, comprise a socio-formative framework which is useful to the capital reproduction process, particularly with regard to the training of manpower capable of adapting subjectively and functionally to precarious jobs.

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