



**MENTAL HEALTH AND SECONDARY EDUCATION INTEGRATED WITH
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: CONSTRUCTING THE STATE OF
THE ISSUE**

**SAÚDE MENTAL E ENSINO MÉDIO INTEGRADO À EDUCAÇÃO PROFISSIONAL
NO BRASIL: CONSTRUINDO O ESTADO DA QUESTÃO**

**SALUD MENTAL Y EDUCACIÓN SECUNDARIA INTEGRADAS CON LA
EDUCACIÓN PROFESIONAL EN BRASIL: CONSTRUYENDO EL ESTADO DE LA
CUESTIÓN**

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How to reference this paper:

ANDRADE, F. R. B.; SILVA, G. G. da. Mental health and secondary education integrated with professional education in Brazil: constructing the state of the issue. **Plurais - Revista Multidisciplinar**, Salvador, v. 9, n. 01, e024020, 2024. e-ISSN: 2177-5060. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29378/plurais.v9i00.19361>



| **Submitted:** 17/12/2023
| **Revisions required:** 20/01/2024
| **Approved:** 19/03/2024
| **Published:** 02/12/2024

Editors: Prof. Dr. Célia Tanajura Machado
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Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

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ABSTRACT: This paper deals with the mental health of young people and its relationship with Secondary Education integrated with professional education in Brazil. Aiming to understand the studies produced around the topic, the State of the Question was carried out through a bibliographic survey in the Scielo, Google Scholar, CAPES periodicals, and Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations databases from 2010 to 2021, which allowed the identification of eight productions that deal with the topic. It was observed that the studies, for the most part, present a quantitative approach with analysis of tests applied to students, pointing out the measurement of levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as promoting relationships with students' academic performance. The results converge to the understanding that the establishment of neoliberal rationality in Brazilian educational policy favors discomfort in students, resulting from the anxiety and stress to which they are exposed.

KEYWORDS: Neoliberal Rationality. Public Policy. Brazilian Education. Performance.

RESUMO: *Este artigo trata da saúde mental dos jovens e sua relação com o ensino médio integrado à educação profissional no Brasil. Tendo por objetivo conhecer os estudos produzidos em torno da temática, realizou-se o Estado da Questão através do levantamento bibliográfico nos bancos de dados Scielo, Google Acadêmico, CAPES periódicos e Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações, no período de 2010 a 2021, o que permitiu identificar oito produções que versam sobre o tema. Observou-se que os estudos, em sua maioria, apresentam uma abordagem quantitativa com análise de testes aplicados aos estudantes, apontando a mensuração dos níveis de estresse, ansiedade, depressão, bem como promovem relações com o rendimento escolar dos estudantes. Os resultados convergem para a compreensão de que a instauração de uma racionalidade de caráter neoliberal na política educacional brasileira favorece um mal-estar nos estudantes, decorrente da ansiedade e do estresse em que estes são expostos.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Racionalidade Neoliberal. Política Pública. Educação Brasileira. Avaliação. Desempenho.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo aborda la salud mental de los jóvenes y su relación con la educación secundaria integrada a la educación profesional en Brasil. Con el objetivo de comprender los estudios producidos en torno al tema, el Estado de la Cuestión se realizó a través de un levantamiento bibliográfico en las bases de datos Scielo, Google Scholar, periódicos CAPES y Biblioteca Digital Brasileña de Tesis y Disertaciones, de 2010 a 2021, lo que permitió identificar ocho producciones que aborden el tema. Se observó que los estudios, en su mayoría, presentan un enfoque cuantitativo con análisis de pruebas aplicadas a los estudiantes, destacando la medición de niveles de estrés, ansiedad, depresión, además de promover relaciones con el rendimiento académico de los estudiantes. Los resultados convergen a la comprensión de que el establecimiento de una racionalidad neoliberal en la política educativa brasileña favorece el malestar de los estudiantes, resultante de la ansiedad y el estrés al que están expuestos.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Racionalidad Neoliberal. Política Pública. Educación Brasileña. Evaluación. Actuación.*

Introduction

The global scenario has contributed to the establishment of neoliberal rationality (Dardot; Laval, 2016) in Brazilian educational policy, which involves managing results and holding teachers and students accountable for achieving satisfactory scores in external assessments. It is clear that these evaluations, being mechanisms for measuring the level of knowledge acquired by students around the world, comparatively demarcate the superiority of specific schools, states, and nations in terms of the acquisition of knowledge by students.

Thus, based on the propositions of Dardot and Laval (2016), who refer to a neoliberal rationality that extends the business organization mode to other fields of sociability, such as politics, social relations, public policies, and the organization of the state, it is understood that Education, as a public policy of a social nature, has been influenced by this rationality. Thus, Education becomes a means of training for work and internalizing neoliberal thinking, which aims to increase subjects' individuality in the name of competitiveness, to the detriment of collective solidarity. While this rationality brings the bias of competitiveness and productivity to Education, it also fosters a malaise in students, resulting from the anxiety and stress they are exposed to in order to achieve excellent results in the assessments.

This situation is present in Brazilian educational policy, covering all levels and modalities of teaching. For example, as a type of Education, Vocational Education arose from the need to provide workers with instrumental qualifications and was disseminated and expanded throughout the world on the basis of the Taylorist and Fordist production model. Today, vocational Education in Brazil is structured through providing courses in private institutions and the public system. Since Decree 5.154/2004 (Brasil, 2004) and the financial incentives of the Professionalized Brazil Program³, the offer of secondary education integrated with professional education has gained centrality in the public system, taking as its perspective the educational principle of work and the integration between technical and preparatory knowledge for an integral formation.

In these terms, it can be seen that families and young people place their expectations of better living conditions on accessing a school that offers secondary Education integrated with vocational Education, thus committing themselves to all the necessary efforts to achieve success in the assessments and internship experiences. In view of these efforts, the following question

³ The *Programa Brasil Profissionalizado* was established by Decree no. 6.302, of December 12, 2007, with the aim of: "[...] stimulate secondary education integrated with professional education, emphasizing scientific and humanistic education, through the articulation between general education and professional education in the context of productive arrangements and local and regional vocations" (Brasil, 2007).

arises: how do reforms to align educational management and pedagogical direction on a global scale influence the organization of secondary Education integrated with professional Education in Brazilian schools and induce the search for performance, impacting the sociability and mental health of young students?

In order to support the search for an answer to the above question, the aim is to find out what studies have already been carried out in Brazil on the subject. To this end, we intend to carry out a State of the Question, which, according to Nóbrega-Therrien and Therrien (2004, p. 7, our translation): "The purpose [...] is to lead the researcher to record, on the basis of a rigorous bibliographical survey, how the subject or object of his investigation stands in the current state of science at his fingertips." In these terms, drawing up a State of the Question allows the researcher to get closer to the topic in question, so that they can deepen their knowledge and identify how the topic has been studied in previous research.

Finally, it is important to note that, based on a systematic bibliographic survey, this study made it possible to identify research, trends, and demands for further study on the subject of *young people's mental health and secondary Education integrated with vocational Education in Brazil*. Next, we look at the circumstances in which the topic has emerged in Brazilian scientific production, and in the next section, we focus on the current state of research on the subject.

Educational reforms, large-scale evaluation and the social and subjective formation of students: critical notes

International relations permeate educational policies and, according to Amaral (2010), actions are not imposed from one country to another, but the debates converge to reflect an international education regime, whose constituent elements involve principles, norms, rules, and procedures considered strategic for solving certain problems. Given this configuration, according to Amaral (2010), international agreements between countries have been formed based on treaties and conventions that dictate guidelines on how to achieve better educational levels and the knowledge necessary for personal, economic, and social development. Thus, over the last two decades, countries have implemented reforms to align educational management and pedagogical direction on a global scale, as Amaral (2010) points out:

[...] Current debates on the reform of education systems internationally indicate a high level of similarity. The lines along which reforms are discussed and implemented are practically the same on a global scale: change of focus (previously on the input and now on the output of educational institutions and teachers), the paradigm of efficiency and effectiveness, decentralization of management, the introduction of market mechanisms, evaluation and benchmarking of institutions are some of the elements of educational reforms and policies not only in Brazil, but also in most countries (Amaral, 2010, p. 50, our translation).

This process also implies a utilitarian view of education that is geared towards economic interests, efficiency, and effectiveness for the national development of countries. As a result, changes in the mode of production require new theoretical and practical knowledge to keep pace with innovation and technological changes, resulting in new demands for the population's schooling.

Regarding the international education regime, Amaral (2010, p. 50) points out that it is the result of the relationship "[...] between cognitive elements (principles, norms and values) and new agents (international organizations, NGOs, etc.) in new social contexts." These cognitive elements are imbued with a rationality that seeks to bring greater efficiency to educational processes along the lines of the market, as well as a social version of this rationality based on the debate on democratizing access to education and its quality and usefulness for society and people.

As a result of the globalization of social and economic relations, developing countries have been influenced to adopt neoliberal actions. Among the targeted measures, Lopes and Caprio (2008) highlight the definition of policies and priorities based on economic analysis, which establishes a cost-benefit correlation of investments based on the productivity returns of individuals to society. Considering this measure, Alves and Moraes (2006), in their analysis of toyotism and productive restructuring, reiterate the capture of workers' subjectivity and state:

[...] it is important to emphasize that the new subjectivity of work is constituted by a complex process that articulates instances of production and social reproduction, and the class subjectivity of work articulated by coyotes is a cleaved subjectivity, divided between the rationalizing and irrational dimension of social life. It is this schizophrenia of global capitalism that allows for the constitution of a supposed new subjectivity of work, "captured" by business values (Alves; Moraes, 2006, p. 112, our translation).

Contributing to these reflections, Alves, Moreira, and Puziol (2009) state that in order to incorporate the neoliberal ideology and better adapt to the toyotist production model, the reforms in Brazilian education were based on the theory of human capital, since they were based

on the discourse that professional qualifications are responsible for a country's development. In practice, there has been a focus on developing competencies as a central feature of the changes present in the country's educational reforms. These competencies are in line with the international debate and the guidelines of multilateral organizations for the economic development of nations. In the words of Alves, Moreira and Puziol (2009):

Educational policies supported by the ideology of competencies, which work to establish a pedagogy for the hegemony of capital, reproduce the new order of flexible capitalism, the axis of professional training. The power of the ideology of competencies is intense, and through the concepts of employability, flexibilization, and deregulation, education is being promoted to adapt to this new reality [...] (p. 51, our translation).

Considering the above, the assessment of student knowledge, carried out through large-scale assessments, takes center stage as a quantitative measurement process of the results achieved in education. Based on these results, competitiveness is established at an international level, accounting for the indices and knowledge considered relevant to the development of countries. In this way, the search for results and bonuses for schools resembles the search for profits, in which good student grades indicate that the educational model is effective, even if the educational process is permeated by the accountability of teachers and students for achieving these results. This means that teachers must constantly motivate and ensure that students take part in these assessments, while they, in turn, must study harder and harder to achieve satisfactory grades, which are taken as a yardstick of academic success.

This pedagogical configuration, based on the search for greater student performance based on the logic of measuring qualitative results in metrics, which inserts schools and their students into local, national, and global competitiveness, also generates in those involved the idea of a constant search for positive results, according to the standards established by current models of educational organization. Given this scenario, it is imperative that we focus our attention on the consequences of this process for the social and subjective formation of students.

The current context leads to the understanding that high performance and productivity are demanded of the individual, which is now considered synonymous with personal and professional success. Through the subjective construction that meritocracy and the search for more performance offer greater possibilities for achieving better living conditions, individuals are involved in a continuous context of searching for and maintaining productivity.

When analyzing the school context as it has been constituted, we see the legitimization of student performance evaluations as a central element in management by results, in which

there is a mobilization aimed at encouraging student participation and achieving good grades, with the aim of recognizing both students and schools through performance in large-scale evaluations.

This reality gives education the role of training the neoliberal Subject. According to Dardot and Laval (2016), individuals are encouraged to associate, in the construction of their subjectivity, the devices of enjoyment and performance that constitute "[...] diversified mechanisms of control, evaluation, encouragement, and participation of all the gears of production, all modes of consumption, all forms of social relations" (p. 362). In view of the above, we proceeded to analyze the cataloged studies that resulted in the production of this article.

Mental health of young people and the educational model of High School integrated to Vocational Education in Brazil: the state of research on the subject

This State of the Question was developed based on research into the most widely recognized and used academic databases in Brazil. Specifically, the productions available on SciELO, Google Scholar, CAPES Periodicals, and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD) were investigated. It should be noted that the search in these databases took place between March 20 and July 31, 2021, during which time searches were carried out, and productions were selected based on the descriptors defined for the research.

The choice of descriptors was aimed at achieving the objectives established for this State of the Question. Thus, the descriptors selected were: 1- Vocational education *and* neoliberalism; 2 - Vocational education *and* mental health; 3 - Vocational education *and* youth; 4 - Neoliberalism *and* mental health; 5 - Vocational education *and* mental health *and* youth. It should be noted that in almost all of the descriptors, the term "professional education" was included, with the exception of descriptor 4, which does not contain it. This decision was made to avoid other combinations, without an explicit focus on vocational education, resulting in dispersed findings in relation to the central theme.

In addition, the use of quotation marks was mainly adopted in Google Scholar due to the limited number of filters available and the variety of types of academic work (journal articles, event proceedings, monographs, dissertations, theses, and books), which generated a large volume of productions. Quotation marks were also used in the CAPES Journal to refine

the search for descriptors 3 and 4, in order to select publications that were more relevant to the topic.

The time frame of the productions covered the period from 2010 to 2021, chosen for the possibility of a more in-depth analysis of the conformations of secondary education integrated with vocational education, especially after the resumption of this teaching model with Decree No. 5.154, of July 23, 2004. It was considered that, from 2010 onwards, the productions offered a more detailed analysis of the implementation of this teaching model in Brazil. As for the language, Portuguese was chosen in order to investigate exclusively Brazilian experiences, since the focus of the study was the reality of students subjected to the Brazilian model of secondary education integrated with vocational education.

With the descriptors and filters defined, the searches were organized by descriptors and databases, highlighting the search methods and filters used. It is important to note that the search links have been saved for later reference. The research was based on the selection of productions, first by title and then by reading the abstracts. The abstracts were read on the basis of choosing the titles most in line with the theme, and this work was done concurrently, since many of the results were not directly related to the topic of interest. Reading the abstracts made it possible to get closer to the themes of the cataloged productions, providing a broader view of what has been researched on the subject in the national context.

During this process, a total of 38 (thirty-eight) productions were selected. After reading the abstracts and final considerations of these productions, it was concluded that only 8 (eight) articles were directly related to the theme of student mental health and the experience of secondary education integrated with vocational education. In addition, it was observed that 7 (seven) of these studies were published in the years 2019 and 2020, indicating that the topic has attracted increasing attention from researchers. With this in mind, we carried out a qualitative analysis of the cataloged productions on students' mental health in the context of secondary education integrated with vocational education.

The contributions of scientific productions on the theme of Mental Health of High School Students Integrated to Vocational Education in Brazil

As highlighted above, among the cataloged productions, 8 (eight) indicated an approximation with the theme of mental health of high school students integrated into vocational education. Among these, we selected the article entitled *Mental Illness in Professional and Technological Education: what graduating students of integrated technical courses think*, produced by Pacheco, Nonenmacher, and Cambraia (2020). This article presents an analysis of the mental health of young high school students integrated into vocational education at a Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology (IF), raising aspects of the academic sphere that have repercussions on student illness.

The study by Pacheco, Nonenmacher, and Cambraia (2020) stands out from the others for adopting a qualitative approach when dealing with the demands presented by students, since most studies on the subject focus mainly on quantitative analyses of tests applied to measure levels of stress, anxiety and depression in young people and adolescents, without delving into the subjective problems experienced by the subjects surveyed.

According to these authors, the aim of the study was to "[...] investigate possible factors of mental suffering/illness related to the school context of students completing three high school courses integrated with professional and technological education at a campus of the Farroupilha Federal Institute" (Pacheco; Nonenmacher; Cambraia, 2020, p. 2, our translation). The research subjects were students enrolled at an IF campus in Farroupilha, described by the authors as:

[...] students in the third year of integrated secondary education in professional and technological education in the Technical courses in Administration, Agriculture and Livestock and Maintenance and Computer Support at the Farroupilha Federal Institute - São Vicente do Sul Campus (IFFar - São Vicente do Sul Campus). The population of students in the final year of the three courses is 245 students, distributed in two classes of the Technical Course in Administration (A and B), four classes of the Technical Course in Agriculture (A, B, C, and E) and two classes of the Technical Course in Computer Maintenance and Support (A and B), totaling eight classes (Pacheco; Nonenmacher; Cambraia, 2020, p. 3, our translation).

In turn, the research methodology used a qualitative approach, from the perspective of getting closer to subjective experiences. The method used was a case study, and for data collection, the researchers used a questionnaire with closed and open questions. At the end of

the questionnaire application and analysis, 87 questionnaires were selected and analyzed using the Content Analysis method.

In discussing the factors that cause stress and anxiety in students in the process of adapting to and experiencing the school pathway in secondary education integrated with vocational education, the authors point out that the students surveyed have a clear view that the school context has, in a way, also provided situations that compromise their mental health. On the subject, the results of the survey revealed that 83% of students responded that the experiences of school life can cause suffering or damage to physical and emotional well-being. Thus, the researchers conclude that:

According to the students' perception, the following were identified as possible factors causing suffering or harm to well-being: difficulties adapting to the institution, relationship difficulties, bullying, and pressure to perform well at school. The factors mentioned are considered to be groups of factors that unfold into others, as will be seen throughout the text (Pacheco; Nonenmacher; Cambraia, 2020, p. 8, our translation).

Thus, the authors bring up the issue of work overload for students, highlighting the volume of content present in the curricular components, linked to family and school situations. In addition, they stress the demand for good performance that comes from themselves, their parents, and the school organization itself. In the meantime, the authors show that the curricular structure of the courses includes subjects from the basic, polytechnic, and technological components, with hours of internships and complementary activities, whose workloads of the courses attended by the subjects surveyed vary between 3,100 and 3,400 hours distributed over the three years of high school. In this context, the authors point out that:

The high number of curricular components results in a heavy workload and a large amount of extra-class work. This condition can be aggravated if there is no curricular integration and articulated work between the curricular components (Pacheco; Nonenmacher; Cambraia, 2020, p. 10, our translation).

The authors go on to reflect on the fact that students report dedicating many hours to their studies, complaining about the excess of activities, anxiety about performance in tests and assignments, and reduced hours of sleep and time dedicated to socializing. Faced with this context, the interviewees mention experiencing suffering in the quest for satisfactory performance, which indicates the need for greater attention and support for these young people, considering the possible consequences of worsening this situation.

The authors also point out that support from family, peers, teachers, and psychologists plays a protective role in students' well-being. Thus, they reaffirm that time for social interaction is fundamental for students' mental health and healthy development, and that guaranteeing this social interaction is essential to the educational process. According to the interviewees, at various times, the time set aside for socializing has been used for studying, with the aim of improving performance. In the words of Pacheco, Nonenmacher and Cambraia (2020):

The difficulty of adapting to the institution in this study, motivated by the distance from family and excessive workload, points to the relationship between the characteristics and activities of the integrated technical courses of the EPT with situations of suffering or illness among students, which requires the institution to take effective action to deal with it. However, it is not possible to say that the possible factors are exclusively school-related, but rather that they are interdependent and interconnected with other factors, such as personal, family, and socio-economic factors, among others. For this reason, we encourage further research into various aspects related to the subject, so that, based on new knowledge, it will be possible to develop more effective ways of tackling problems related to students' mental health (p. 22-23, our translation).

As the authors point out, the process of mental suffering is multifactorial, and it is necessary for professionals working in environments that students frequent on a daily basis to be attentive to the relationships between people and the provision of conditions for young people's physical and mental well-being.

In short, the article by Pacheco, Nonenmacher, and Cambraia (2020) presents elements that point to the overload of study hours as a risk factor for mental illness among young students. In order to reconcile the learning of subjects from the common basis of secondary education with the contents of the technical area, young people need to dedicate a lot of time to their studies, in addition to the entire period of classes at school during the week. This reality points to a centrality in work, which has demanded dedication and time from individuals as early as school time, which may be causing early stress and physical and mental exhaustion in students.

Following on from the analysis of the productions on the subject, we inferred that the *Estudo da condição de Saúde Mental do Estudante do IFS* (Study of the Mental Health Condition of IFS Students), authored by Gomes *et al.* (2019), was carried out with students enrolled in integrated high school and subsequent technical education at the Federal Institute of Sergipe (IFS). According to the researchers, questionnaires were administered using *Google Forms*. It should be noted that the results of this study have contributed to:

[...] to map and list the mental health demands of students in vocational and technological education, specifically at the Federal Institute of Sergipe, thus

making it possible to verify issues already identified by psychology professionals in the follow-up of students, as well as to identify new demands. In view of this, it is necessary to think of strategies for new interventions in search of prevention and promotion related to the mental health of IFS students [...] (Gomes *et al.*, 2019, p. 511, our translation).

Also, according to the researchers, among the feelings identified in high school students at the IFS, the following stood out: nervousness, worry, sadness, changes in sleep, frequent headaches, frequent tiredness, and difficulties in making decisions, all of which interfere with their school performance. In addition, respondents pointed to emotional, financial, and interpersonal relationship issues. For the authors:

This whole picture also corroborates Carlotto and Camara (2008), who point out that the younger the students, the greater the emotional exhaustion, remembering that in our study most of the sample was young. We also highlight the weight of the workload and the number of subjects as factors that contribute to stress, given the increase in the volume of work, reading and assessments, corroborating the results of these authors' research (Gomes *et al.*, 2019, p. 51, our translation).

In line with the context described in the study by Gomes *et al.*, the doctoral thesis by Nascimento (2016) entitled *Fatores emocionais e de saúde mental: avaliação de alunos de uma escola pública federal visando ações de promoção e prevenção no ambiente escolar* (Emotional and mental health factors: evaluation of students from a federal public school aiming at promotion and prevention actions in the school environment), aimed to: "To investigate the presence of emotional and mental health changes in high school adolescents at a federal public school that may indicate some level of emotional discomfort or psychological distress capable of interfering with the learning process" (Nascimento, 2016, p. 20). To this end, Nascimento carried out a study with 94 volunteer students, who were enrolled in the three grades of high school at the Polytechnic College of the Federal University of Santa Maria (RS). On conducting research with students, Nascimento (2016) points out that:

[...] 94 agreed to take part in the research and answered the SRQ-20 instrument (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION - WHO, 1994). After tabulating the data, we identified 42 females and 52 males, aged between 12 and 19, all single. Out of a total of 30 first-year students, 7 scored above 7; out of a total of 30 second-year students who answered the questionnaire, 14 scored above 7; and out of a total of 34 third-year students who answered the questionnaire, 10 scored above 7, totaling 31 students out of a total of 94 in the sample who scored above the cut-off point established for the SRQ-20 (Graph 1). Considering the Cut-off Point stipulated as a parameter for applying the SRQ-20, we can deduce that approximately 23.33% of 1st-year students, 46.66% of 2nd-year students, and 29.41% of 3rd-year students, which is equivalent to an average percentage of 32.98% of the total sample of 94 students. Thus, it can

be seen that 32.98% have some level of psychic and emotional suffering that can be considered as having a type of Minor Psychic Disorder or Minor Mental Disorder (MPD/MD) (p. 72 - emphasis added, our translation).

At one point in his study, Nascimento (2016) discusses the performance of the students at the school surveyed, stating that this school topped the ranking of all schools in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in the National High School Exam (ENEM) for the third year running. In his conclusion, the researcher emphasizes the need to promote actions aimed at students' health starting at school, as this is a privileged space for adolescents to socialize.

We have identified another study that discusses the promotion of actions around the mental health of vocational and technological education students. This study is the result of the completion of a master's degree by Prado (2019), the title of which is: *É possível falar sobre suicídio na escola? A construção de um material educativo a partir do contexto da educação profissional e tecnológica* (Is it possible to talk about suicide at school? The construction of educational material from the context of professional and technological education). The work is a booklet which, according to the author, "[...] aims to contribute with information about suicidal behavior, especially for professionals who work in the school environment, in order to reduce the stigma on the subject and contribute to the prevention of student suicide" (p. 3, our translation).

The aforementioned author, when discussing the risk factors for suicide, points out that:

There is no "single" cause for suicidal behavior! In fact, several factors interact with its development, including personal and family life history characteristics, genetic influence, cultural and socioeconomic issues, stressful situations for the person, some personality traits, and the presence of mental disorders, among others (Prado, 2019, p. 9, our translation).

Therefore, in preparing his master's thesis entitled *Formação de professores para identificação de fatores de risco associados ao suicídio na adolescência* (Training teachers to identify risk factors associated with suicide in adolescence), Silva (2020) sought to analyze the possibilities and limitations of working with a group of high school teachers from a school in the interior of the state of São Paulo, with the aim of training them to identify adolescents at risk of committing suicide. To this end, the author presents the conceptual foundations of adolescence and suicide,

[...] which shows the conceptual aspects of adolescence and suicide from a bioecological perspective, highlighting Urie Bronfenbrenner's theoretical contributions to human development. The results indicated that this theory enables a contextualized understanding of suicide in adolescence, with a view

to studying the interrelationships of personal, interpersonal, and sociocultural factors that influence suicidal behavior in adolescence (Silva, 2020, p. 7, our translation).

Silva (2020) then carried out a survey using a questionnaire to check the knowledge and perspectives of 18 (eighteen) high school teachers from a school in the interior of the state of São Paulo on the process of identifying risk factors for suicide in adolescents. According to the author:

The results [...] obtained through the application of the Attitudes and Knowledge Questionnaire in relation to the identification of risk factors associated with suicide in adolescence show gaps in terms of knowledge of suicide in adolescence. The categories that showed the greatest need for training were: epidemiological knowledge, mental disorders and suicidal behavior, psychoactive substances, and suicide risk assessment (Silva, 2020, p. 62, our translation).

In view of the research findings, the aforementioned researcher concludes that "[...] teachers do not have the necessary knowledge about suicide in adolescence" (Silva, 2020, p. 63, our translation), and proposes a teacher training model "[...] through group dynamics, theoretical expositions and discussions of the feelings and perceptions of the participants, regarding the theme of suicide in adolescence" (p. 62, our translation).

In their article entitled *Intervention and Management of Anxiety in Integrated High School Students*", Soares and Almeida (2020) report on the experience of therapeutic Intervention with a group of 12 integrated high school students from the Federal Institute of Northern Minas Gerais - Januário Campus. The Intervention was based on Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and used, according to the authors, "[...] the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale - HAM - A as a data collection and intervention evaluation tool" (Soares; Almeida, 2020, p. 1, our translation).

The study revealed that the students taking part in the Intervention had various physical and emotional symptoms related to anxiety, including "[...] anxious mood, autonomic symptoms, tension, and cardiovascular symptoms" (Soares; Almeida, 2020, p. 1, our translation). Based on these results, the researchers carried out anxiety management sessions, using psychoeducation techniques, cognitive restructuring, and behavioral changes in order to reduce the levels of anxiety presented by the participants. After the Intervention, Soares and Almeida (2020) re-applied the Hamilton anxiety assessment, at which point they found a reduction in anxiety levels and an improvement in all the symptoms previously observed in the students taking part in the study. In view of the above, the authors conclude that:

[...] an education that comes close to an ideal of Integral Human Formation must include the development of students as a whole, with a view to forming critical and emotionally healthy individuals. To this end, it is necessary to develop actions aimed at providing emotional support to adolescents/students throughout their educational and professional training process, and thus contribute to their well-being, mental health, learning and integral human formation (Soares; Almeida, 2020, p. 19, our translation).

Vocational training processes, in addition to training for work, must provide world knowledge about the social reality that permeates labor relations. In this perspective, Meireles *et al.* (2020), in their article *Trabalho, sofrimento psíquico e educação profissional: possíveis relações* (Work, Psychological Distress and vocational education: possible relationships), aim to analyze "[...] the relationship between the capitalist mode of production and psychological distress, taking into account the understanding of how this same relationship is represented in EFA public policy texts⁴ on the subject" (Meireles *et al.*, 2020, p. 423, our translation).

To this end, the authors promote the debate on the capitalist mode of production as a generator of psychological suffering, insofar as they understand that productive restructuring has contributed to increasing the precariousness of work and the loss of labor rights, generating greater financial and emotional instability in workers.

In this way, Meireles *et al.* (2020) propose, based on the educational function of work, school education in the professional and technological field based on omnilateralism, aiming to provide a complete human education, which includes the debate on the relationship between work and mental health, with the aim of guaranteeing information that contributes to the prevention of mental illness.

Last but not least, the study by Caponi and Daré (2020) entitled *Neoliberalismo e Sofrimento Psíquico: A Psiquiatrização dos Padecimentos no Âmbito Escolar (Neoliberalism and Psychic Suffering: The Psychiatrization of Illness in the School Environment)* shows, based on the work of Dardot and Laval, that students are encouraged to invest in obtaining knowledge that will make them more competitive and productive. There is, thus, an overvaluation of those who conform to the pace considered standard for acquiring knowledge at each school level, with those who don't perform well being considered failures. As a result, these students are often given a psychiatric diagnosis in the field of cognitive and attention deficits. In view of the above, issues related to students' mental health have been gaining visibility in the educational context, since they directly interfere with the learning process.

⁴ EPT - Professional and Technological Education.

Therefore, the dichotomy between failure and success in the school environment has become increasingly present, and is related to adapting to the new school scenario and getting good grades in exams, whether they are common subjects or large-scale assessments. For the authors, this process has generated countless comparisons between schools, even between different states and countries, without taking into account socio-economic and cultural differences, establishing performance parameters for students to achieve. Thus, for Caponi and Daré (2020):

Under the yoke of the impositions of neoliberalism, the students who fail are those who have not invested enough in their human capital, who have not taken responsibility for the success of their individual projects, and who have not achieved the levels set outside their social realities. But they are also those whose scores in the evaluations cause the educational indexes to fall, who give up on being competitive and effective, and, above all, those who don't achieve the desired performance (p. 310, our translation).

This means that those who don't live up to what is established will be exposed to labels of success and failure based on their school performance. On this path, the process of constantly encouraging productivity and competitiveness in the pursuit of excellent performance in educational assessments is established. As a result, young people are under even more pressure because they are approaching the age at which they can enter the job market.

Thus, it can be seen that the studies resulting from the State of the Question now discussed generally seek to identify the levels of psychological distress and mental disorders experienced by young people. This indicates the need for the school to promote actions to prevent students from becoming mentally ill. However, this demand coexists with the maintenance of an educational model geared towards demands for greater productivity and competitiveness, which are also elements that contribute to increasing anxiety and causing physical and mental exhaustion in young people.

Final considerations

It is understood that the State of the Question favored the identification of Brazilian scientific productions that contribute to broadening the debate on the mental health of young people and secondary education integrated with vocational education in Brazil, as well as providing an understanding of how researchers in the country have approached this issue.

It is noteworthy that, during the search and cataloging of scientific papers, a significant amount of production was identified on secondary education integrated with vocational education after the publication of Decree 5.154/2004. However, as expected, scientific production on the mental health of young people and its relationship with school experience has been low, although there has been a growing interest in the subject since 2015.

Finally, most studies investigating the mental health of students take a quantitative approach, analyzing tests applied to adolescents and young people with the aim of measuring levels of stress, anxiety, and depression and correlating these aspects with school performance.

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CRediT Author Statement

- Acknowledgements:** Not applicable.
 - Funding:** Not applicable.
 - Conflicts of interest:** There is no conflict of interest.
 - Ethical approval:** Not applicable.
 - Availability of data and material:** Not applicable.
 - Author contributions:** The authors are responsible for the research, analysis and writing of the article.
-

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.

