

YOUTH(S) AND THE WORLD OF WORK: A REFLECTION

JUVENTUDE(S) E MUNDO DO TRABALHO: UMA REFLEXÃO

LOS JÓVENES Y EL MUNDO DEL TRABAJO: UNA REFLEXIÓN



Luciana Fraga HOPPE¹
e-mail: lucianahoppe@ifsul.edu.br



Ana Sara CASTAMAN²
e-mail: ana.castaman@sertao.ifrs.edu.br

How to reference this paper:

HOPPE, Luciana Fraga; CASTAMAN, Ana Sara. Youth(s) and the world of work: a reflection. **Plurais - Revista Multidisciplinar**, Salvador, v. 10, n. 00, e025003, 2025. e-ISSN: 2177-5060. DOI: 10.29378/plurais.v10i00.20024



| **Submitted:** 14/04/2024

| **Revisions required:** 17/09/2024

| **Approved:** 28/11/2024

| **Published:** 22/07/2025

Editors: Prof. Dr. Célia Tanajura Machado
Prof. Dr. Kathia Marise Borges Sales
Prof. Dr. Rosângela da Luz Matos
Editor Adjunto Executivo: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

¹ Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Southern Rio Grande do Sul (IFSul), Camaquã – Rio Grande do Sul (RS), Brazil. Educational Affairs Technician at IFSul and a member of NAPNE – Center for Support to Persons with Specific Needs at the Camaquã campus.

² Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS), Sertão – Rio Grande do Sul (RS), Brazil. Professor of Basic, Technical, and Technological Education at the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS) – Sertão Campus.

ABSTRACT: Youth(s) immersed in the capitalist society present themselves as a challenge to the State and its institutions, mainly considering Brazilian social inequalities. This study aims to understand the concept of youth(s) and its relationship with work and education, using High School Integrated with Professional Education (EMIEP) as a form of teaching capable of performing this interlocution through supervised internships. In this research, it was observed the indispensability of broad structural foundations to guarantee the implementation of public policies and the rights of young people, and that they have been giving up on their studies because of work. It is concluded that the strengthening of EMIEP and the intensification of an internship policy are presented as a way to merge work with education, binding permanence at school with a grant-aid. It is considered that, through the educational support of EMIEP, critical sense and citizenship increases in students, which impacts in the modification of the society in which they live.

KEYWORDS: Youth(s). Access to education. Professional and technological education. Internships.

RESUMO: *A(s) juventude(s) imersa(s) na sociedade capitalista apresenta(m)-se como desafio ao Estado e às respectivas instituições, principalmente levando-se em consideração as desigualdades sociais brasileiras. Este estudo objetiva compreender o conceito de juventude(s) e sua relação com o trabalho e a educação, utilizando-se o Ensino Médio Integrado à Educação Profissional (EMIEP) como forma de ensino capaz de realizar essa interlocução por meio dos estágios supervisionados. Observou-se, nesta pesquisa, a imprescindibilidade de amplos alicerces estruturais para garantia de concretização das políticas públicas e dos direitos dos jovens e que os mesmos vêm abandonando os estudos para trabalhar. Conclui-se que o fortalecimento do EMIEP e a intensificação de uma política de estágios apresentam-se como opção para conciliar trabalho e educação, vinculando permanência na escola à bolsa-auxílio. Considera-se que, mediante o aporte educacional do EMIEP, amplia-se senso crítico e cidadania nos estudantes, impactando na modificação da sociedade em que vivem.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Juventude(s). Acesso à educação. Educação profissional e tecnológica. Estágios.*

RESUMEN: *La(s) juventud(es) inmersa(s) en la sociedad capitalista se presenta(n) como un desafío para el Estado y sus respectivas instituciones, especialmente teniendo en cuenta las desigualdades sociales brasileñas. Este estudio tiene como objetivo comprender el concepto de joven(es) y su relación con el trabajo y la educación, utilizando el Educación Secundaria Profesional (EMIEP) como una forma de enseñanza capaz de llevar a cabo esta interlocución a través de pasantías supervisadas. Se observó, en esta investigación, la indispensabilidad de amplias bases estructurales para garantizar la implementación de políticas públicas y los derechos de los jóvenes, los cuales cada vez más abandonan la escuela por razones relacionadas con el empleo. En conclusión, el fortalecimiento del EMIEP y la intensificación de una política de pasantías se presentan como una opción para conciliar trabajo y educación, vinculando la permanencia en la escuela a la beca. Se considera que, a través del aporte educativo del EMIEP, se expande el sentido crítico y la ciudadanía en los estudiantes, impactando en la modificación de la sociedad en la que viven.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Juventud(es). Acceso a la educación. Formación profesional y tecnológica. Prácticas.*

Introduction

Young people, under the dominance of capital, are currently among the most affected by the transformations in society (Corrochano, 2004; Antunes, 2005). They strive, amidst structural challenges, financial constraints, and a range of other difficulties, to establish their individuality, find their place in the world, and, in many cases, secure their very survival. In Brazil—a country marked by profound social inequalities—the differentiation among young people becomes evident, giving rise to multiple “youths.”

Statistical data collected by IBGE (2022, 2024) and presented later in this study, along with the analyses of authors such as Corrochano (2004) and Frigotto (2009), corroborate that an alarming number of young people from Brazil’s working class, many of whom have not completed secondary education, are dropping out of school. The primary reason cited for this trend is the need to work³. As a consequence, those who do not complete basic education face significant barriers to entering the labor market, given Brazil’s structural unemployment, which increases the likelihood of underemployment—characterized by precarious, low-paid work.

In contrast to precarious employment, supervised internships have emerged as a quality pathway for young people’s entry into the labor force. These internships provide financial stipends⁴, guidance from teachers at school, and supervision by professionals in the host companies (Brasil, 2008a). However, it is crucial to recognize that, within the context of Brazil’s structural unemployment, even internships governed by Law No. 11,788/2008 (Brasil, 2008a) carry the risk of students being exploited as a cheap labor force. Ensuring the quality of education and vigilant oversight by educational institutions in supervising interns is essential to prevent the educational component of these internships from being reduced to mere employment arrangements.

Against this backdrop, the Federal Institutes of Education, Science, and Technology (FIs) (Brasil, 2008b)—with campuses in over 600 locations across Brazil—emerged with the mission of providing quality education to all young people, regardless of social class. These institutes have introduced the Integrated High School with Vocational Education (EMIEP) as the core model in their curricular organization. Although the number of such institutions remains limited considering Brazil’s more than 5,500 municipalities, this study assesses the

³ This essay does not go into the percentages by gender, race, and other relevant factors, which are indicative for future studies.

⁴ According to Law No. 11.788/2008 (Brasil, 2008), the stipend is compulsory in the case of non-compulsory internships and optional for compulsory internships, i.e., those provided as compulsory coursework.

potential for these institutions to improve young people's life prospects by offering an omnilateral education. This study thus seeks to explore the concept of youth(s) and its relationship to work and education, using EMIEP as an example of a public policy⁵ capable of fostering this critical linkage between education and the world of work through supervised internships.

The text is organized into four sections. The first presents the methodological framework. The second discusses the concept of "youth(s)" and its emergence as a category. The third section addresses the relationship between youth(s) and the world of work. Finally, the fourth section examines youth(s) and education, speculating on how EMIEP, as implemented by the FIs, and supervised internships might impact young people's trajectories and their transition into the labor market.

Methodological Procedures

The methodology adopted to achieve this study's objective is characterized as exploratory and descriptive, as it aims to build familiarity with the topic and provide a detailed analysis. According to Gil (2017, p. 28, our translation), the combination of exploratory and descriptive approaches is commonly employed by "[...] social researchers concerned with practical applications [...]." The study also draws on bibliographic research (printed materials and online publications) to collect information and deepen understanding of the topic (Fonseca, 2002; Gil, 2017), as well as document analysis (reports and official documents available on institutional websites) (Fonseca, 2002). A qualitative approach was prioritized, since the data derived from the researched reality "[...] cannot be quantified, focusing instead on understanding and explaining the dynamics of social relations [...]" (Fonseca, 2002, p. 20, our translation).

Furthermore, the concept of youth(s) is analyzed in light of Law No. 12,852/2013 (Brasil, 2013), IBGE reports (2022), and key theoretical contributions from authors such as Bourdieu (1983), Pais (1990a, 1990b), Margulis and Urresti (1996), Peralva (1997), Dayrell

⁵ Public policy is understood as: "[...] any systematic set of interrelated actions and procedures, publicly adopted by a government authority for the purpose of routinely dealing with a specific issue" (Reis, 2010, p. 1, our translation), such as: education, health, energy, transportation, among others. Furthermore, EMIEP is a public policy that was guaranteed as a state policy in the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDBEN), Law No. 9394/1996, amended by Law No. 11.741/2008.

(2003), Frigotto (2009), Prates and Garbin (2014), and Feixa (2020), among others. To address the relationship between youth(s) and the world of work, the study considers insights from Corrochano (2004), Tumolo and Tumolo (2004), Antunes (2005), Figaro (2008), Wood (2001), and IBGE (2024), among others. Finally, in discussing EMIEP as implemented by the Federal Institutes and its articulation between school and the labor market, this study relies on the works of Ciavatta (2005), Kuenzer (2007), Brazil (2008b), Saviani and Duarte (2010), Escott and Moraes (2012), and Castaman and Rodrigues (2020), among others.

Youth(s) Over Time

The initial focus of this study was to explore how youth(s) can be defined. To this end, we first referred to the Youth Statute, Law No. 12,852/2013 (Brasil, 2013, p. 1, our translation), which, in Article 1, §1, states that “[...] individuals between 15 (fifteen) and 29 (twenty-nine) years of age are considered young.” Until recently, it was commonly assumed that young people were those under the age of 18, given that this marks the legal age of majority in Brazil following the changes to the Civil Code in 2002. However, as will be discussed further, the definition of youth(s) is far more complex than a mere numerical age classification, encompassing historical, economic, and social circumstances.

The Youth Statute highlights several rights, such as citizenship (already established in the 1988 Federal Constitution), social and political participation, education, professional training, work and income, health, the environment, public safety, among others. In principle, the statute envisions an ideal world. Nevertheless, as evidenced by news reports, statistical surveys, and the authors referenced in this study, many of these rights are not guaranteed to all young people. It is apparent that the creation of public policies—though framed as state policies and supported by laws and decrees—often lacks the basic structures necessary for their implementation and oversight, responsibilities that lie with the state but remain unfulfilled in practice.

According to the demographic census conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2022), Brazil has a population of 203,080,756 people, of which 45,312,128 (22.31%) are young individuals aged 15 to 29. The census further revealed that 6,098,932 (13.46%) of these young people live in households without access to a regular water supply, and 1,203,975 (2.65%) lack access to any form of piped water. Additionally, 11,522,287

(25.43%) reside in areas without adequate sanitation systems—relying on rudimentary cesspits, open ditches, rivers, lakes, streams, the sea, or lacking toilets altogether.

Such conditions underscore the challenges of enforcing legislation that guarantees rights to youth. The absence of basic infrastructure compromises this population's access to health, safety, sustainability, and environmental protections. This study does not aim to evaluate infrastructure directly, nor to undermine the credibility of existing legislation. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate that even with legal frameworks in place, safeguarding youth requires robust and comprehensive foundations.

This introductory analysis suggests that defining youth(s) is inherently complex, involving multiple factors that shape its meaning, as highlighted in the IBGE demographic census (2022). The term “youths” has increasingly been adopted by scholars to reflect the diversity and specificities of “being young” in modern societies (Frigotto, 2009). As the author argues, “[...] for economic, political, cultural reasons and, above all, due to class and class fractions or social groups, it only makes sense to speak of *youths*” (Frigotto, 2009, p. 25, emphasis added, our translation).

In his study on youth leisure and sociability, Pais (1990a) emphasizes that the behaviors and positions of young people are closely related to the environments and social norms in which they are immersed. As such, specific patterns of conduct emerge within each cultural milieu. The term “youth”, therefore, encompasses a constitutive plurality of diverse youth experiences (Pais, 1990a). Similarly, Frigotto (2009) points out that young people who do not belong to affluent classes—namely, the children of rural and urban workers—despite possessing distinct psychological, social, and cultural traits consistent with their peer groups, “[...] tend to undergo a process of premature adultification” (Frigotto, 2009, p. 25, our translation). The necessity for these young individuals to enter the labor market—whether formally or informally, often in precarious conditions and for low pay—stands in stark contrast to the experiences of “middle-class youth or children of the owners of the means of production, who are able to prolong their childhood and youth” (Frigotto, 2009, p. 25, our translation).

Sociological studies stress the importance of moving beyond conventional notions of youth that portray this group as part of a unitary culture (Pais, 1990b). According to Pais (1990b), youth sociology must explore not only similarities but also the social differences among young people. He identifies two prevailing trends in this field of study: one views youth as a group that defines its culture based on shared age-related aspects; the other conceptualizes youth as a diverse group, differentiated by social class, financial conditions, access to power,

interests, and opportunities. As Pais (1990b, p. 3, our translation) underscores, “[...] it is a misuse of language to subsume under a single concept of youth social universes that have practically nothing in common.”

Bourdieu (1983), in his seminal text *“Youth is Just a Word”*, argues that being young and being an adult are defined within an age-based criterion, yet these categories only acquire meaning as social constructs, arising from the confrontation between the new and the old. He emphasizes that “[...] we are always someone’s young or someone’s old” (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 113, our translation). In contrast, Margulis and Urresti (1996) contend that youth is not merely a word and that it transcends age classification. The authors argue that historical, cultural, and material conditions vary across societies, shaping what it means to be young. Prates and Garbin (2014) support this perspective by noting that youth cannot be reduced to a purely biological or psychological definition. Rather, it constitutes “a condition related to historical, economic, social, and cultural constructions, in which aspects such as age, generation, social class, institutions, and gender are intricately intertwined” (Prates; Garbin, 2014, p. 1–2, our translation). In this sense, the segmentation of life into distinct stages can be understood as a complex process of social construction (Pais, 1990b).

Historically, up until the late 18th and early 19th centuries, there appeared to be no clear boundaries between childhood and youth; the transition was understood merely as the shift from dependency to participation in adult life (Pais, 1990b; Prates; Garbin, 2014). In the 17th century, among the higher social classes, specific terms emerged to designate childhood (Pais, 1990b), along with a separation between the “[...] family space and the external world, and a redefinition of the child’s place within the family” (Peralva, 1997, p. 2, our translation). The child increasingly came to be seen as a distinct subject within the family, requiring preparation for a future role in society (Peralva, 1997).

For centuries, children left their parents’ side at an early age and accompanied adults in community tasks, learning what was necessary and contributing to the work of adults (Peralva, 1997). This dynamic effectively erased what we now consider “youth,” as children transitioned directly from apprentices to helpers and then independent workers—thus, to adulthood (Peralva, 1997). In the 19th century, child labor persisted in manufacturing and industry, characterized by minimal wages and long working hours, a practice justified by family poverty and the value parents placed on children’s earnings (Peralva, 1997).

However, communities as spaces for learning trades were gradually replaced by schools “[...] run by Jesuits, doctrinarians, or Oratorians between the 15th and 17th centuries” (Prates;

Garbin, 2014, p. 3, our translation). This shift toward the separation of students into classes was pivotal in fostering the emergence of concepts such as childhood and youth. Although this division was initially based on levels of knowledge, it inevitably resulted in age-based segregation (Prates; Garbin, 2014).

Following a trajectory shaped by religious, political, economic, and moral interests, it was only in the post-World War II⁶ period that a more defined notion of youth began to take shape. This development was made possible by several key factors: population growth and the increasing need for education prior to entering the labor market; the universalization of human rights, with young people's rights being recognized by the state; and the rise of the cultural industry, which began to view young people as potential consumers (Prates; Garbin, 2014). Some studies, as Pais (1990b, p. 145, our translation) observes, argue that youth transitioned from a “[...] ‘socialization of production’ to a ‘socialization of consumption.’”

It is well understood that life stages are constituted “[...] inseparably from the slow process of modernity's formation [...] in its intrinsically educational dimension” (Peralva, 1997, p. 15, our translation). In simplified terms, youth can be considered a social category; however, it must be acknowledged that “[...] the distinct conditions and experiences permeating young people's daily lives challenge us to consider different ways of experiencing this time of waiting, in different youth(s)” (Prates; Garbin, 2014, p. 11, our translation).

The diverse experiences of each historical period have profoundly shaped patterns of youth behavior. Feixa (2020, p. 39) refers to the first generation of the 21st century as the “@ Generation,” highlighting that generations “[...] are not compact structures but rather symbolic references that vaguely identify agents socialized within the same historical period.” He further explains that the “@ Generation” underscores three dimensions influencing this process: “[...] universal—though not necessarily widespread—access to new information and communication technologies;” the blurring of boundaries between sexes and genders; and “cultural globalization, which necessarily entails new forms of social exclusion on a planetary scale” (Feixa, 2020, p. 39, our translation).

In today's world, young people are actively seeking identity and recognition as individuals within a globalized, digitized society where urban and digital (virtual) environments are highly valued. According to Feixa (2020), access to technology is not universal, which may influence young people in ways that are yet to be fully understood. Moreover, the multiple

⁶ The post-World War II period began in 1945, after the end of the Second World War, and lasted until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1991.

possibilities for virtual interaction have the potential to deeply affect interpersonal relationships and how individuals make sense of the multifaceted society of this century. Among other things, any individual can adopt a “mask” to play a role (protected by anonymity) or, conversely, share unfiltered opinions on social media, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish between real people and events and fabricated ones. In this way, “fetishized⁷” technology emerges as yet another factor influencing youth, with its impact varying according to social class.

Furthermore, Dayrell (2003, p. 42, our translation) emphasizes that the process of becoming young “[...] is influenced by the concrete social environment in which it develops and by the quality of the interactions it fosters.” He argues that this reflective process is where each young person is formed and simultaneously forms themselves as a subject: “[...] a unique being who appropriates the social, transforming it into representations, aspirations, and practices, interpreting and making sense of their world and the relationships they maintain” (Dayrell, 2003, p. 43-44, our translation). Historically and socially, youth have increasingly sought to establish themselves as key actors in education, culture, politics, and the world of work, striving to consolidate their space in these domains.

At least two distinct conceptualizations of this life stage can be identified. The first is a romanticized vision of youth as a hedonistic phase in which young people enjoy life without concern for the future (Dayrell, 2003). The second offers a more sobering and realistic perspective, recognizing that a significant proportion of young people are compelled to seek survival from an early age by entering the “labor market⁸.” The challenges surrounding the transition into work life are identified by Pais (1990b) as the primary factor transforming youth into a “social problem.” In fact, by the late 1970s, difficulties related to employment and entry into active life had “[...] progressively taken the forefront in studies on youth [...]” (Pais, 1990b, p. 143, our translation). As will be seen in the following section, these challenges remain highly relevant today.

⁷ The meaning attributed to fetishism is that man becomes subordinate to the products he himself has produced, allowing the products to rule over him, like deities (Marx, 2017).

⁸ The expression “labor market”, used here, is in line with Antunes (2005), referring to the process of work becoming a means of subsistence, turning the workforce into a simple commodity.

Youth and the World of Work

A brief clarification regarding the meaning of “world of work” as used in this study, and its distinction from the term “labor market,” is necessary. Figaro (2008) highlights that the world of work encompasses a series of factors that involve and connect the human act of working with the environment in which it takes place. It constitutes a broad category as it allows for the inclusion of “[...] concepts such as work, labor relations, employment ties, labor market, wages, technology, exchange, profit, capital, organizations, control, power, sociability, culture, and communication relations” (Figaro, 2008, p. 93, our translation). The world of work is distinguished by its breadth and comprehensiveness, as it also incorporates, according to the aforementioned author, the labor market itself. Within the capitalist system, this market can be understood as “[...] the social space in which all individuals, **in order to survive**, must buy and sell goods” (Tumolo; Tumolo, 2004, pp. 334–335, emphasis in the original, our translation). For members of the working class⁹, who do not own the means of production, the only “commodity” available for exchange is their labor power.

Antunes (2005) presents a counterpoint, arguing that while labor constitutes the structuring element of human sociability and of the process of becoming human, within the capitalist order, it assumes the form of waged labor and alienation¹⁰. In its primordial sense, labor as “[...] the creation of useful things” is disfigured and becomes merely a means, rather than “the ‘primary necessity’ of human fulfillment” (Antunes, 2005, p. 69, our translation). As a result, young people from working-class families have entered the labor force under unstable conditions, as one of the prevailing trends in the world of work is the “[...] growing exclusion of youth as they reach the age to enter the labor market [...]” (Antunes, 2005, p. 78, our translation). Many of them become part of a vast contingent of workers in precarious jobs, unemployed, and without realistic prospects of employment, due to the persistence of structural unemployment (Antunes, 2005).

⁹ According to Wood (2001, p. 73, emphasis added, our translation), there are two ways of analyzing class: “as a structural location or as a social **relationship**”. The first treats class as a stratum, a layer of society, differentiated according to economic criteria (Wood, 2001). The second is the socio-historical conception of class, which is established by the relationship between “appropriators and producers, determined by the specific way in which, to quote Marx, ‘surplus value is extracted from direct producers’” (Wood, 2001, p. 73, our translation).

¹⁰ Antunes (2005) points out that work is a founding moment of human sociability, but that, in capitalist society, it becomes wage labor, taking on the form of alienated work, disfigured in its sense of creating useful things, it becomes a means and “[...] in the formulation offered by Marx in the Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts, it can be seen that ‘the worker is reduced to the condition of merchandise’ [...]” (Antunes, 2005, p. 69, our translation).

Immersed in a capitalist society dominated by a few who exploit the majority, the lives of young people can be highly complex. For many, youth is a period marked by “[...] concrete struggles for survival and tensions with institutions such as the workplace and the school” (Dayrell, 2003, p. 50, our translation). The relationship between underprivileged youth and the labor market reflects the reality of Brazilian society, which has produced a large mass of people marginalized from economic development and with few opportunities for inclusion or reintegration (Dayrell, 2003).

Governmental and nongovernmental initiatives aimed at fostering the economic, social, and cultural inclusion (or reinclusion) of young people began in the 1980s in various Latin American countries and gained momentum in Brazil during the 1990s (Sposito; Carrano, 2003; Prates; Garbin, 2014). Several institutions began documenting new processes of knowledge production regarding Brazilian youth, and from these studies emerged public policies aimed at protecting young people. Among them are the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) under Law No. 8.069/1990, the Organic Law of Social Assistance (LOAS) No. 8.742/1993 (amended by Law No. 12.435/2011 to include the protection of children and adolescents as an objective of social assistance, support for underprivileged youth, and promotion of their integration into the labor market), the National Program for Youth Inclusion (Projovem) launched in 2005, and the aforementioned Statute of Youth, Law No. 12.852/2013 (Brasil, 2013), among others. It is worth noting that until 2003, federal education, health, and employment policies did not consider actions specifically targeted at young people. Up to that point, youth in Brazil were predominantly served by social policies intended for the general population across all age groups (Sposito; Carrano, 2003).

The Statute of Youth seeks to alter this scenario by establishing a wide range of rights for young people. However, an analysis of the section relevant to this study—Title I, Chapter II, Section II, which addresses the “Right to Professionalization, Work, and Income”—reveals provisions concerning public measures to support collective forms of labor organization, special conditions for balancing work and study, varied levels and modalities of education compatible with school schedules, and public policies aimed at promoting internships, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities for youth, among others (Brasil, 2013). At present, however, these statutory provisions appear largely unfeasible, as suggested by the previously discussed challenges, such as structural unemployment.

Although there are legal protections in place for youth in relation to work and income, Brazilian society continues to operate under the constraints of capitalism, marked by profound

social inequality and poverty, where legions of unemployed individuals—many of them young—struggle for subsistence (Antunes, 2005). This raises critical questions about the extent to which the state could realistically enforce measures such as special working hours for student workers.

It is widely acknowledged that, in reality, beyond legislation designed to protect and safeguard individuals, what ultimately governs everything and everyone is the market and the logic of capital: the dynamics of supply and demand compel people to submit to the most varied forms of precarious employment. Moreover, young people often find themselves subjected to exploitative working hours and inappropriate tasks in their efforts to secure a source of subsistence. From this, it can be inferred that, in the current context of structural unemployment, those who do not accept certain conditions are likely to remain unemployed. This represents a critical point, as it reveals the State's persistent inability to intervene effectively and ensure the enforcement of existing laws.

In addition to the issues outlined above, the world of work has been undergoing profound transformations, including new technologies, organizational models, occupational structures, employability requirements, and the duration of unemployment periods. However, these changes do not affect all regions, profiles of workers, or age groups uniformly; their impact varies in accordance with the specific circumstances of each country, locality, or demographic segment (Corrochano, 2004). The author further asserts that young people “[...] are increasingly being recognized as one of the groups most severely affected by transformations in the economy and the labor market” (Corrochano, 2004, p. 427, our translation). In light of this reality, she poses a crucial question: how are young people coping with or experiencing these changes? Corrochano observes that no homogeneous analysis is possible, given the heterogeneity of youth. For some, “[...] entering the world of work is an aspiration to be fulfilled upon completing their studies; for others, work imposes itself as an experience from childhood, restricting possibilities for personal development” (Corrochano, 2004, p. 427, our translation).

In this context, the number of young people leaving secondary education to join the workforce, or attempting to balance work and study, is significant, as indicated by data from the annual education module of the National Continuous Household Sample Survey (PNAD Contínua) conducted by IBGE (IBGE, 2024). The data reveal that, in Brazil in 2023, there were 48.5 million individuals aged 15 to 29 (a figure higher than that recorded in 2022 by the demographic census) (IBGE, 2024). Of these young people, 15.3% were employed and

studying; 25.5% were exclusively studying; 19.8% were neither employed nor studying; and 39.4% were employed but not studying (IBGE, 2024). Another alarming statistic is the marked increase in school dropout rates from the age of 15 onward, with the highest percentages recorded among those aged 16 (16%) and 18 (21.1%) (IBGE, 2024). The need to work was cited as the main reason for leaving school in 2023 by 41.7% of young people (aged 14 to 29 with less than a complete secondary education), representing an increase of 1.5 percentage points compared to 2022 (IBGE, 2024).

Considering the characteristics of youth presented thus far and the diverse realities they inhabit, it becomes clear that, within this segment of the working class, there is a common thread: the necessity to work. The following section seeks to examine the role of FIs and the implementation of the EMIEP program as a significant public investment aimed at supporting young people from working-class families.

Youth and Education: The EMIEP Offered by the FIs and the Link Between School and the World of Work

The creation of the FIs through Law No. 11.892/2008 (Brasil, 2008a), during the Expansion Plan of the Federal Network of Professional, Scientific, and Technological Education (RFEPCT)¹¹, and the implementation of the EMIEP (as provided for in LDBEN, No. 9.394/1996, amended by Law No. 11.741/2008, Title V, Chapter II, Section IV-A) as the main form of teaching in these institutions may represent an attempt by the State to achieve what Brazil's educational laws envision in terms of the emancipation of youth. This represents an effort to break the duality, which has persisted for centuries, between education for work (intended for the working class) and propaedeutic education aimed at access to higher levels of education (reserved for the elite). To this end, the integrated curriculum combines technical education with general education, seeking to transcend a mere juxtaposition of content: “[...] a new understanding and praxis must be established that integrates and promotes dialogue among different forms of knowledge, that is, science, technique and technology, empirical knowledge, and common sense [...]” (Castaman; Rodrigues, 2020, p. 4, our translation).

¹¹ As of 2019, the RFEPCT is made up of 38 FIs, 2 Federal Technological Education Centers (Cefet), the Federal Technological University of Paraná (UTFPR), 22 technical schools linked to federal universities, and Colégio Pedro II (Brasil, s. d.).

Thus, integrated education aligns with the goal of comprehensive and omnilateral human development, providing both general and technical training to all students. Ciavatta (2005) notes that, while the concept of comprehensive education appears under various names—such as integrated education, polytechnic education, and technological education—it carries a historicity that can be apprehended without difficulty. Its origins lie in socialist education, which aimed at the omnilateral development of human beings. Among the many socialists who defended this idea was Marx, who “[...] draws from the contradictions of social production itself the need for scientific and technological education” (Ciavatta, 2005, p. 86, our translation).

The integrated curriculum offered by the FIs should provide young students with an understanding of work as an ontological and structuring activity of social being. From this perspective, work can be considered a principle of citizenship, detached from its conceptualization as torture, suffering, and worker exploitation, and instead regarded as a creative activity that enlivens the human being, in stark contrast to the exploitation perpetuated by capital (Ciavatta, 2005). Understanding these distinctions allows one to conceive of work as an educational principle that guides a professional education project committed to human development (Saviani; Duarte, 2010).

The education envisioned by the FIs aims to provide the children of the working class not only with technical training but also access to universities and leadership positions. This approach contrasts sharply with earlier versions of Professional and Technological Education (EPT), which were aimed at workers in specialized institutions or “[...] within the workplace itself, almost exclusively, teaching only ways of doing, while neglecting the development of psychophysical and social skills” (Escott; Moraes, 2012, p. 4, our translation). Meanwhile, schools serving the elite promoted an intellectualized education detached from instrumental actions (Escott; Moraes, 2012). This duality is also highlighted by Kuenzer:

[...] the education of workers and citizens in Brazil has historically been shaped by the structural duality category, given the clear demarcation in the educational trajectories of those destined for intellectual and instrumental functions, in a society where the development of productive forces sharply delineated the division between capital and labor [...] (Kuenzer, 2007, p. 27, our translation).

In light of the above, the EMIEP is seen by some scholars already cited in this article as a potential pathway for providing youth with an omnilateral education, through work as an

educational principle. Thus, children of the working class, upon entering the FIs, should receive an education that emancipates, considering that omnilateral formation requires that every individual be conceived and understood in terms of:

[...] their demands and aspirations. It is not merely about instilling certain competencies and skills that will, in an instrumental way, enable and integrate them into the world of work, but about offering them broad and unrestricted opportunities for reflection on what this means (Castaman; Rodrigues, 2020, p. 10, our translation).

Nevertheless, the productive forces of society remain divided between capital and labor, and governments, in a sense, mirror this duality, oscillating between right- and left-wing positions. These ideological shifts directly influence the maintenance of both governmental and state public policies. In light of these factors, the implementation of EMIEP within the FIs was only made possible due to changes in legislation—specifically, the revocation of Decree No. 2.208/1997¹² (Brasil, 1997), which prohibited the integration of secondary education with vocational education, and the approval of Decree No. 5.154/2004¹³ (Brasil, 2004), which introduced advancements for this educational model. However, the fragility of public policies becomes evident, even when established through legislation, as they can be drastically affected by ideological alterations in government. The lack of guarantees regarding budgetary allocation for the implementation, continuity, and monitoring of these policies is a recurring issue affecting many public policies and laws, including the Youth Statute and EMIEP itself.

Furthermore, the Brazilian reality reveals that many families lack the financial stability to keep their children enrolled in secondary education. They often face shortages in resources for transportation, housing, and food, among other necessities, and as IBGE (2024) data indicate, young people increasingly leave school in order to work. Completing basic education, especially through EMIEP, may facilitate students' access to the world of work and enable their insertion into it in a more critical and informed manner. However, when school abandonment occurs, it becomes considerably more difficult to achieve professional qualifications and secure quality entry into the workforce. This gives rise to a vicious cycle: work becomes necessary, yet precarious due to the lack of schooling, and studying becomes impossible due to the need to work.

¹² Instituted by the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government.

¹³ Instituted in the first term of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government.

One alternative for fostering articulation between educational institutions and the world of work lies in the implementation of supervised internships. These internships are incorporated into the IFs as extension activities and, from this perspective, facilitate exchanges between the knowledge of the school and the world of work. Within their workplace experiences, interns deepen their technical, theoretical, social, and cultural understanding, engaging critically with the relationships that emerge in these environments. Later, back in school, they have the opportunity to share and refine these insights with their teachers and peers, thus developing as both competent professionals and socially engaged citizens.

The regulation of internship activities in Brazil is established by Law No. 11.788/2008 (Brasil, 2008b), which defines internships as “[...] supervised educational activities developed in the workplace environment, aimed at preparing students enrolled in regular education for productive work” (Brasil, 2008b, p. 1, our translation). The law recognizes interns as students engaged in developmental tasks, rather than as regular employees of the company. However, despite this legal framework, there is still a tendency to exploit these young people as a source of cheap labor. This study does not delve deeply into investigating such situations; instead, it focuses on the ideal conditions for internships, where schools maintain dialogue with host companies, and mentors and supervisors fulfill their roles in compliance with the law. Under these circumstances, with the educational support provided by the FIs, EMIEP students have a genuine opportunity not only to contribute to society and transform it but also to develop critical awareness of the prevailing power relations.

Consequently, as supervised internships are part of an educational process, it is considered that they will generate a significant social impact through the involvement of youth in the world of work. This is particularly true when these young people receive an education such as that offered by EMIEP, where the knowledge they develop is shared and exchanged among companies, educational institutions, and society at large.

Final considerations

Amid the intricate web of social, economic, and political relations, diverse youth groups strive to establish themselves as subjects of rights through their individualities. This study has demonstrated that it is not possible to classify youth solely based on biological age and that “youths” constitute a broad and complex category, particularly from the perspective of a

country marked by profound social inequalities such as Brazil.

The statistical data are alarming, both regarding basic infrastructure and school dropout rates due to the need to work, findings that, unfortunately, corroborate the observations made by the authors studied. Historically, privileged classes have always had access to knowledge and, consequently, to power and the maintenance or elevation of their families' social status. In contrast, the children of the working class remain bound to hard labor and dependent on meager wages for survival. Even the emergence of the concept of childhood and youth is a relatively recent phenomenon in history, driven by the interests of the bourgeoisie and capital. Moreover, it has become commonplace today to employ the term “meritocracy” in discourses that frame social mobility as attainable solely through individual effort and work, regardless of one's origins. Such narratives aim to shift the burden of responsibility away from institutions and the State. However, the reality is quite the opposite and incontestable: young people without access to clean water or basic sanitation, or those forced to enter the labor market to survive, do not possess the same opportunities as their peers who can enjoy leisure time, attend quality schools, or enroll in preparatory courses. For the former, “merit” amounts to mere survival, and with rare luck, slight improvements in living conditions.

Public policies aimed at youth in Brazil are relatively recent, having begun to emerge in the 1990s. These policies still lack a solid foundation to become firmly established and produce tangible impacts in the lives of their intended beneficiaries. Laws such as the Statute of the Child and Adolescent and the Statute of Youth, among other initiatives targeting this demographic, represent undeniable advances. However, the State—or successive governments, each with their distinct ideologies—diverge in their recognition of youth's needs and in prioritizing this group, among other issues. These divergences hinder meaningful progress, compounded by disputes over the budget allocations necessary to implement a wide range of investments. It is crucial, therefore, to reflect on the extent to which youth-focused policies stem from the political participation of young people themselves and whether they are encouraged to exercise critical thinking and engage with public authorities. Creating spaces for youth participation in the formulation, maintenance, and oversight of their rights is vital to prevent them from becoming mere spectators of capital and its interests. In doing so, young people could cease to be regarded as precarious labor, as unemployed masses, or as a mere promise of a future that never seems to arrive, even after decades.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the FIs, already consolidated in various regions of Brazil (albeit still incipient), holds significant potential to improve the living conditions of

young people, particularly through EMIEP, which aims to foster their development as citizens. These institutions could help cultivate the critical awareness necessary for youth to influence the actions of the State and its institutions, which are tasked with developing critically minded citizens capable of questioning and transforming their environments. Thus, the IFs emerge as a source of hope for the future, depending on the priorities set by subsequent governments.

The texts analyzed in this study make it evident that young people are among those most affected by political, social, and economic transformations, as well as by shifts in the world of work. Data from IBGE further confirms that school dropout driven by the need to work remains a pressing issue, revealing that many young people are compelled to prioritize survival over what should characterize this stage of life. It is hypothesized that a robust policy to strengthen the FIs and promote supervised internships as a gateway to the labor market—supported by the educational foundation provided by these institutions—could enhance school retention and generate broader societal impacts through the delivery of quality education. Supervised internships present themselves as a potential mechanism for articulating the relationship between work and education, though reconciling these two spheres within a capitalist society and in the context of structural unemployment is neither simple nor easy.

It becomes evident, therefore, that unless society—particularly the working class and its youth—develops a clear vision of its aspirations and goals as a nation, and unless this vision is reflected in governance, they will remain subjugated to dominant interests. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for a critical perspective on youth policies to prevent institutions like the FIs and educational models such as EMIEP, which hold the potential for liberating education, from being dismantled or weakened. This leads to yet another cycle: critical thinking emerges from quality education, and for the working class, such education can only be achieved through the support of public power, which, in turn, will act only when pressured by a critically conscious working class.

REFERENCES

ANTUNES, Ricardo L. C. **O caracol e sua concha**: ensaios sobre a nova morfologia do trabalho. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2005.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. "A juventude é apenas uma palavra". *In*: BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Questões de sociologia**. Rio de Janeiro: Marco Zero, 1983. p. 112-121.

BRASIL. **Programas e Ações da SETEC**: Expansão da Rede Federal. Brasília: Ministério da Educação, [s.d.]. Available at: <https://portal.mec.gov.br/setec-programas-e-aco-es/expansao-da-rede-federal>. Accessed in: 26 Mar. 2024.

BRASIL. **Decreto nº 2.208, de 17 de abril de 1997**. Regulamenta o § 2º do art. 36 e os arts. 39 a 42 da Lei nº 9.394, de 20 de dezembro de 1996, que estabelece as diretrizes e bases da educação nacional. Brasília: Presidência da República, 1997. Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto/d2208.htm. Accessed in: 27 Mar. 2024.

BRASIL. **Decreto nº 5.154 de 23 de julho de 2004**. Regulamenta o § 2º do art. 36 e os arts. 39 a 41 da Lei nº 9.394, de 20 de dezembro de 1996, que estabelece as diretrizes e bases da educação nacional, e dá outras providências. Brasília: Presidência da República, 2004. Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2004-2006/2004/decreto/d5154.htm. Accessed in: 27 Mar. 2024.

BRASIL. **Lei nº 11.788 de 25 de setembro de 2008**. Dispõe sobre o estágio de estudantes. Brasília: Presidência da República, 2008a. Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2008/lei/111788.htm. Accessed in: 21 Mar. 2024.

BRASIL. **Lei nº 11.892 de 29 de dezembro de 2008**. Institui a Rede Federal de Educação Profissional, Científica e Tecnológica, cria os Institutos Federais de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia, e dá outras providências. Brasília: Presidência da República, 2008b. Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2008/lei/111892.htm. Accessed in: 26 Mar. 2024.

BRASIL. **Lei nº 12.852, de 5 de agosto de 2013**. Institui o Estatuto da Juventude e dispõe sobre os direitos dos jovens, os princípios e diretrizes das políticas públicas de juventude e o Sistema Nacional de Juventude - SINAJUVE. Brasília: Presidência da República, 2013. Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2011-2014/2013/lei/112852.htm. Accessed in: 27 Jun. 2023.

CASTAMAN, Ana Sara; RODRIGUES, Ricardo Antonio. Ensino Integrado: perspectivas e provocações. **Revista Educação e Emancipação**, São Luís, v. 13, n. 2, 2020. DOI: 10.18764/2358-4319.v13n2p133-151. Available at: <https://periodicoseletronicos.ufma.br/index.php/reducaoemancipacao/article/view/14941>. Accessed in: 26 Mar. 2024.

CIAVATTA, Maria. A formação integrada: a escola e o trabalho como lugares de memória e de identidade. **Revista Trabalho Necessário**, v. 3, n. 3, 2005. DOI: 10.22409/tn.3i3.p6122. Available at: <https://periodicos.uff.br/trabalhonecessario/article/view/6122>. Accessed in: 21 Nov. 2023.

CORROCHANO, Maria. C. Jovens operários e operárias – experiência fabril e sentidos do trabalho. **Perspectiva**, v. 22, n. 2, p. 425-450, 2004. Available at: <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/perspectiva/article/view/9869>. Accessed in: 30 Jun. 2023.

DAYRELL, Juarez Tarcísio. O jovem como sujeito social. **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, n. 24, p. 40-52, 2003. DOI: 10.1590/S1413-24782003000300004. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/rbedu/a/zsHS7SvbPxKYmvcX9gwSDty/>. Accessed in: 30 Jun. 2023.

ESCOTT, Clarice Monteiro; MORAES, Márcia Amaral Correa de. IX Seminário Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas “História, Sociedade e Educação no Brasil”. História da educação profissional no Brasil: as políticas públicas e o novo cenário de formação de professores nos institutos federais de educação, ciência e tecnologia. In: SEMINÁRIO NACIONAL DE ESTUDOS E PESQUISAS “HISTÓRIA, SOCIEDADE E EDUCAÇÃO NO BRASIL” – HISTEDBR, 9., 2012, Campinas. **Anais[...]** Campinas: UNICAMP, 2012. p. 1492–1508. Available at: https://histedbrantigo.fe.unicamp.br/acer_histedbr/seminario/seminario9/eixo_2.html. Accessed in: 21 Mar. 2024.

FEIXA, Carles. Geração @. A juventude na era digital. In: GARBIN, Elisabete Maria; PRATES, Daniela Medeiros de Azevedo Prates (Org.). **Juventudes contemporâneas: Emergências, Convergências e Dispersões**. Porto Alegre: CirKula, 2020. p. 24-49.

FIGARO, Roseli. O mundo do trabalho e as organizações: abordagens discursivas de diferentes significados. **Organicom**, n. 9, p. 90-100, 2008. Available at: <https://www.revistas.usp.br/organicom/article/view/138986/134334>. Accessed in: 21 Nov. 2023

FONSECA, João José Saraiva da. **Metodologia da pesquisa científica**. Fortaleza: UEC, 2002.

FRIGOTTO, Gaudêncio. Expectativas juvenis e identidade do Ensino Médio. Ensino Médio no Brasil: “Juventudes” com futuro interdito. In: **Salto para o Futuro. Juventude e escolarização: os sentidos do Ensino Médio**. Ano XIX, boletim 18. Brasília: Ministério da Educação, 2009. p. 24-29. Available at: <http://portaldoprofessor.mec.gov.br/storage/materiais/0000012176.pdf>. Accessed in: 1 Mar. 2024.

GIL, Antonio Carlos. **Como elaborar projetos de pesquisa**. 6. ed. São Paulo: Atlas, 2017.

IBGE. Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. **Características dos Domicílios**. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 2022. Available at: <https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas/sociais/trabalho/22827-censo-demografico-2022.html?t=resultados>. Accessed in: 1 Feb. 2024.

IBGE. Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. PNAD Contínua uma em cada quatro mulheres de 15 a 29 anos não estudava e nem estava ocupada em 2023. **Estatísticas Sociais**. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 2024. Available at: <https://agenciadenoticias.ibge.gov.br/agencia->

noticias/2012-agencia-de-noticias/noticias/39531-uma-em-cada-quatro-mulheres-de-15-a-29-anos-nao-estudava-e-nem-estava-ocupada-em-2023. Accessed in :26 Mar. 2024.

KUENZER, Acácia Zeneida (Org). **Ensino Médio**: construindo uma proposta para os que vivem do trabalho. São Paulo: Cortez, 2007.

MARGULIS, Mario; URRESTI, Marcelo. **La juventud es más que una palabra**. Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1996.

MARX, Karl. **O capital**: crítica da economia política: livro I: o processo de produção do capital. 2. ed. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2017.

PAIS, José Machado. Lazeres e sociabilidades juvenis: um ensaio de análise etnográfica. **Análise Social**, v. XXV, n. 108-109, p. 591-644, 1990a.

PAIS, José Machado. A construção sociológica da Juventude. **Análise Social**, v. XXV, n. 105-106, p. 139-165, 1990b.

PERALVA, Angelina. O jovem como modelo cultural. **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, n. 5-6, p. 15-24, 1997. Available at: https://educa.fcc.org.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1413-24781997000200003. Accessed in: 30 Jun. 2023.

PRATES, Daniela Medeiros de Azevedo; GARBIN, Elisabete Maria. Juventude(s): reabrindo questões. *In*: ENCONTRO NACIONAL DE DIDÁTICA E PRÁTICA DE ENSINO (ENDIPE), 7., 2014, Fortaleza, Ceará. **Anais [...]**. Fortaleza: UECE, 2014. p. 1-12.

REIS, Bruno Pinheiro Wanderlei. Políticas Públicas. . *In*: OLIVEIRA, D. A.; DUARTE, A. M. C.; VIEIRA, L. M. F. **Dicionário**: trabalho, profissão e condição docente. Belo Horizonte: UFMG/Faculdade de Educação, 2010. Available at: <https://gestrado.net.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/326-1.pdf>. Accessed in: 15 Sep. 2023.

SAVIANI, Demerval; DUARTE, Newton. A formação humana na perspectiva histórico-ontológica. **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, v. 15, n. 45, p. 422-590, 2010. DOI: 10.1590/S1413-24782010000300002. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/rbedu/a/yXjXQvzWfhSp5VNhX6KqKLh>. Accessed in: 30 Jun. 2023.

SPOSITO, Marília Pontes; CARRANO, Paulo César Rodrigues. Juventude e políticas públicas no Brasil. **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, n. 24, p. 16–39, 2003. DOI: 10.1590/S1413-24782003000300003. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/rbedu/a/dH674czshpNpQDsJ8vsJHLh/>. Accessed in: 20 May 2024.

TUMOLO, Ligia Maria Soufen; TUMOLO, Paulo Sergio. A vivência do desemprego: um estudo crítico do significado do desemprego no capitalismo. **Trabalho, Educação e Saúde**, v. 2, n. 2, p. 327-344, 2004. DOI: 10.1590/S1981-77462004000200007. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/tes/a/dpGWnRCX8Gwjn6ZD5NjJHrz>. Accessed in: 15 Nov. 2023.

WOOD, Ellen Meiksins. **As origens do capitalismo**. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2001.

CRediT Author Statement

- Acknowledgements:** No.
 - Funding:** No funding was received.
 - Conflicts of interest:** There are no conflicts of interest.
 - Ethical approval:** As this study is based on bibliographic research and document analysis, with no involvement of human participants, approval from a Research Ethics Committee was not required.
 - Data and material availability:** Yes. Books and materials available for public access were used. The publications and data obtained online are listed in the references section with their respective links
 - Authors' contributions:** Author 1: conceptualization, methodology, data production and analysis, writing of the manuscript. Author 2: project administration, validation, and review.
-

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

