

Conferences

School and work in a historical perspective: contradictions and controversies

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All society lives because it consumes; and consumption depends on production. That is, on work. All society lives because each generation in it makes sure it trains the next generation and transmits some of its experience, educates it. There is no society without work and without education
(Konder, 2000, p. 112).

Anaxagoras’ idea that *man thinks because he has hands*, expresses a historical process where the human being became human and the hands represented the tools by which he appropriated the means of living. For millions of years human beings were only collectors of what nature offered. They gathered fruit, fished and hunted. The idea of surplus did not even exist. Hands also served as the first tool to till the land for the sowing of seeds. Using the hands, the human being produced his working tools, and modified his relationship with nature and with other human beings, hence modifying his living conditions and his nature.

In the past, work was a process between man and nature, a process in which man, through his own action, measured, regulated and controlled his metabolism with nature. He even faced natural materials with a natural effort. He put natural forces to work belonging to his body, arms, legs, head, hands, so as to appropriate the natural material in a useful manner for his life. In acting, through this movement, on the nature external to him and modifying it, he modified his own nature at the same time (Marx, 1983, p. 149).

The human being enters into this process entirely, with his physical energy and his intellect and accumulated experience. Thinking and doing are dimensions of the same unit of diversity. There is no point in establishing linear relationships between knowledge, techniques, technology and production through work. A new technique can arise out of the accumulation of experiences

and can lead to an advance in knowledge. Likewise, years of basic research can lead to new knowledge, techniques and technologies and modify methods of production. In the human world nothing is linear. Everything is historical, mediated and contradictory.

The mode of social production of human existence encompasses *necessarily and primarily* material production, but involves at the same time and in a singular manner, also language, ideas, values, ideologies, emotions, feelings and the institutions that feed the different social modes of production. Therefore, in all human history, the different means of production (tribal, ancient, medieval, capitalist, socialist), whenever they involve the triad made up of a material basis (economic-social), the supra-structural dimensions linked to values, ideologies, ideas, theories and emotions, and the institutions that consolidated them, produce and reproduce the social relations¹.

The precedence of material production, as repeatedly pointed out by Marx and Engels, does not derive from a superiority of the material activity, but of a constraint by the fact that human beings, as natural beings, cannot go without the production of material goods to cater for their biological needs and the conditions required for reproduction and the continuation of life. As such, human work takes place because of need and not as a free choice.

In other words, a *quantum* of work producing values of use will be as *eternal* or historical as human existence. There is not, therefore, in this sense the possibility of the end of work. The struggle for human beings is to shorten this working time constrained by the need to liberate, effectively, free time — a sphere where the human capacity can fully develop.

In this perspective, a major facet in the capitalist society is the historical struggle of the working classes to shorten the working hours. This struggle, however, is the opposite of what the *businessmen* and the intellectuals of the capital system preach and practice: advocating

the reduction of the working day, with its intensification and reduction in salaries, in the name of capital crises. Is this not the goal of the businessmen or the governors, especially in the world's rich countries, in response to the crisis that they themselves fabricated?

The emergence of exploitation and the dominance of certain groups or classes over others appear in human history with the emergence of surplus and the fight for its appropriation. This is the principle and the bedrock of slavery, a servile status and forms of exploitation in societies that are split into classes as the method of capitalist production.

This text is not the place for an analysis of the different historical means of production and mapping out the specific forms of exploitation. It is merely pointed out that in examining the specificities we understand, unequivocally, that each one of them arises out of given social relations and production techniques and given values, theories, symbols and institutions whose role is to reproduce the dominant social relations and power.

That was how, in ancient and medieval society, reality was explained and ordered through values, beliefs and "theories" centred on a metaphysical and theocentric perspective. The explanation of the relations and forms of ownership and production and human life as a whole was the prerogative of supra-historical forces. The relationships among the modes of production, knowledge and education in ancient and medieval societies were demarcated by an *apartheid* between those who were citizens and those who were slaves or servants. Power was, supposedly, a divine gift and the cultivation of knowledge a privilege of the ruling classes. Slavery or a servile status was, therefore, understood as part of the natural order, derived from a divine will, which created this order. Hence, slavery, a servile status and exploitation did not need to be disguised. The slave was known as an animal that spoke.

The means of capitalist production emerged out of the contradictions, struggles and conflicts of the means of feudal production and took approximately seven centuries to become the dominant means of production, which remains the case today. This means of production is centred on private property, and in contradiction and paradoxically, under the ideas of equality, freedom, laic values and positivist scientific development.

It brings with it therefore, a positivity and civilisational dimension, but in remaining a mode of class production, that keeps humanity split into categories, it inherits the negativity and structural inequality of social relations, albeit in different forms. Capital and work configure the new classes, not the only ones, but the fundamental ones. Capital condenses in itself, increasingly, the means and tools of production, currently with the particular mode of science and technology as the productive forces. The slave and the servant are legally liberated from their owners,

but submitted to relations of asymmetrical power. From a slave or servant, he has been transformed into an employee who owns his working strength (physical and mental). He has become free from the proprietor, but also free from the means of life. From a slave, like an animal that speaks, he is now viewed as an animal that thinks. His task does not require knowing what he does, but rather carrying out the production command given to him. In this perspective, the ideal employee is the person who seldom thinks and who *does what he is asked to do well*. Hence, Taylor, one of the classical theorists of management and work management in the budding capitalist society, said that the ideal situation would be if the employee was a domesticated monkey.

As regards the ideology, the bourgeoisie breaks away from the divine essence of the medieval age, but replaces it with a human essence understood as the "*nature of men*" (*utilitarian, selfish*). From Locke, Hume and Hobbes, Adam Smith and Frederick Hayek to the economists, sociologists, anthropologists, pedagogues and psychologists of the capital order, it is the projection of the specific nature of the bourgeoisie man, of the rationality of the private proprietor who relates to others by mediating their selfish interests. As Marx put it: *The essence of the capitalist man was raised to the capitalist essence of the man*.

Work is a central aspect, but not in its ontological creative dimension but rather as a special good, a working force, to be negotiated on the market. Common sense guided by the capitalist *cultural ethos* makes the majority of people consider that work is merely something that produces goods or services in exchange for financial remuneration. It is common for people who do not have a remunerated activity to consider themselves as non-workers, even if they spend 12 to 16 hours a day doing domestic activities, for example. This is a blending and economist manner to understand the means of production of existence that expresses the core of the capitalist ideology.

Exploitation in capitalism does not show itself through mechanisms of external coercion, even though these may exist and be exercised on a frequent basis. Its force is in the exploitation that occurs in the very legal employment contract anchored in positive law. This same law that defines private property, safeguarding it and therefore preserving the interests of the capital. The naturalization of a structurally asymmetrical relationship between capital and work is the basis and ideological bedrock of the disguise of exploitation. The minimum wage in the different countries expresses the variation of the degree of legalised exploitation of these societies. How else can one explain the differences in remuneration between wage earners in England, France and Portugal and these countries in relation to the Latin American and African countries? It certainly is not only and fundamentally a question of comparative costs. It is a

question of relations of strength, domination and power inside and among nations.

SCHOOL AS THE CREATION OF THE BOURGEOISIE MODERNITY: A LONG-LASTING PLACE FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT WORK

*In practice one has to take one step at a time
— the theory has to contain the whole path*
(Bertold Brecht).

For thousands of years human beings educated themselves from generation to generation, learning from one another, finding answers to challenges and problems in the production process of their lives. Education and human training, before all else, is a social and cultural process. School as we know it, like the society that constructed it, are not natural facts, but are the result of historical processes. The historical origin of school occurred, especially during the 18th century, within the same process of the emergence of modern science and the ascension of the bourgeoisie as the hegemonic social class. It was born, as regards the ideological discursive aspect, as a public, free, universal and laic institution that had, at the same time, the function of developing a new culture, integrating the scientific knowledge into the new generations and the ideas of the modern society and social order, in a systematic form. However, school, in truth, since its origin, was organised above all for those who did not need to sell their work effort and who had time to live their childhood and adolescence taking advantage of their leisure hours.

In effect, from the start there was an obvious unsolvable contradiction between the political-economic structure, the social relations of a budding society and the possibility of an equal opportunity and unitary school. In reality we witnessed the instigation and perpetuation, on the one hand, of the classical training school, with a broad scientific and cultural basis for the managing classes and another restricted pragmatic, instrumental, skill enhancing and professional training institution geared towards the demands of the market, for the employees. The goal is to teach, train, enhance skills or educate in accordance with the suitable function of production and a given development project designed by the ruling classes. An education in homeopathic doses, for Adam Smith, or which prepared people to “serve” in a suitable function of the productive system, considering what is most superfluous and burdensome, as Stuart Mill stated.

Without any attempt at disguising it, at the start of the 19th century, Antoine Louis Claude Desttut de Tracy, in 1802, expounded what historically has come to pass:

Working class men, from a young age, have the need to send their children to work. These children need to acquire knowledge early, and above all the habit and tradition of hard work that awaits them. They cannot therefore waste time in schools (...). The children of the erudite classes, on the other hand, can dedicate more time to their studies; they have to learn a lot of things to achieve what is expected of them in the future (Desttut de Tracy, 1802, cited in Frigotto, 1987, p. 15).

Even under this duality, school was conceived as an *environment for reproduction and production of knowledge*, values, attitudes and symbols. It is under the aegis of this classical function, of a cultural and social institution and the profound pursuit of science and scientific education that the most solid education systems were built in the major capitalist countries. In societies of dependent capitalism², such as in Brazil, however, up until today there is no effective national education system and we got to the end of the 20th century without managing to make primary schooling a universal good.

In what context does a linear relationship start to be built between education and work or employment? Two basic aspects can be highlighted, from the 1950s onwards, which brought about this change. Firstly, the growing fight of the working class for the right to primary schooling for their children. But secondly, chiefly because of the incitement of the capitalist system crisis and the increasing inequality among nations, regions and social groups, and the radicalisation of structural unemployment.

An overriding question occupied the leaders and intellectuals of the central capitalist system after the Second World War and the geopolitical enlargement of socialism: what would be the key to reducing inequality among nations and among individuals? It was Theodoro Schultz’s team, in the United States, who throughout the 1950s attempted to answer this question and who constructed the notion of human capital. This is understood as the stock of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and health levels that empower the workforce of the different nations. This research earned him the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1978.

The basic theory devised by Schultz (1973), and which became common sense, was that countries, or families and individuals, who invested in education would end up getting an equal or greater return than other productive investments. This would be the key to diminishing inequality among nations, social groups and individuals. This comprises an integrating perspective of school education in the world of employment and a strategy to avoid the penetration of the socialist mindset, as well as the risk of expansion in the capitalism dependent and peripheral countries.

It is in accordance with the theory of human capital that draws up plans, directives and educational strategies,

especially for capitalism dependent countries, and the idea is consolidated that social ascension and mobility is guaranteed through schooling, through well-paid jobs. This integrating perspective of the school, paradoxically, led in the opposite direction to the capitalist social relations, with concentration of capital and a monopoly of science and technology, an increase in structural unemployment and an expansion of precarious work³. It is worth pointing out, as noted by Marx in 1852 in a letter to his friend Weidemever, that it is *the limits of an epoch — of a class — more than an deliberate “egoism” or a “class lie” that explain the limitations of ideas*. In effect, the research by Natália Alves and the studies we are carrying out about the insertion of the young and adults into the job market indicate that, in given contexts in Portugal and Brazil, the young and adults who have more schooling find it more difficult to find work⁴.

What is the change of focus that the managers of the capital system undertake, within their class limits, to explain the horror of structural unemployment and the precarious nature of work? How can the linear relationships be sustained among schooling, professional training, social mobility and the reduction of inequality among nations and individuals in this context? A scenario that H. P. Martin and H. Schumann (1996) labelled the ‘20 by 80’ society to describe the inclusion in access to well-being and wealth of only 20% of human beings.

In this context the school institution and the professional training processes began to encompass new aspects grounded on a regression that exacerbated the conception of the rational economic human. The isolated individual who fights for his place at any price. Margaret Thatcher translated this mindset, dictating that there was no society, but rather individuals. A mindset that postulates that there is not room for everybody, but only for those who are the most competent, who strive for “total quality”, who identify themselves with the company or who are entrepreneurs, managers or self-employed.

This transposes the shift, despite the well worn slogan of inclusion, from an integrating perspective of school to the justification for social inequality. This is why we witness the emergence of new notions that have the ideological function of confirming this new world (dis)order. In effect, the new notions of knowledge society, total quality, multi-skills, poly-cognition, multiple qualifications, abstract training, flexible training, re-qualification, competencies, employability and entrepreneurship comply with this ideological function.

These notions are formulated, especially from the 1980s onwards, by the international bodies (collective sentries and intellectuals from the hegemonic centres of the world’s capital system, who constitute themselves as the heralders who guide the educational reforms, linked to the reforms of the State. A minimal social state that, as regards education, needs to control public spending and take from the teachers that which identifies them): to

produce, organise and socialise knowledge and values. In this backdrop, of major importance are the evaluation systems that lead to sweeping changes, both in terms of organisation and in terms of the political-pedagogical aspects. As regards organisation, the major ideas are linked to management and evaluation, while as for the pedagogy, the neo-pragmatic mindset is to learn how to learn, employability competencies and entrepreneurialism.

The reforms that have taken place in the educational world, and particularly in technical-professional training, are hence clearly predefined as specific strategies of the so-called structural adjustment that implies reforms to the State in the political-institutional aspects and in the economic-administrative aspects. In relation to these reforms, regular education and technical-professional training, once again emerge as the *goose that lays the golden eggs* which can lead us to the new world order defined by globalisation and productive restructuring. The new slant, different from the ideological theory of human capital of the 60s and 70s, is that the objective is not to integrate everybody, but only those who acquire “basic skills” that generate “competencies” recognised by the market. Competencies and skills are no longer a guarantee of a job and ascension in a given career, but they lead to employability.

The mindset of the new skills — knowledge, values and management, and therefore new employability competencies — supersede the goal of education and technical-professional training as a social and subjective right. They are now viewed as services or goods to be acquired to compete in a productive, market-oriented educational perspective and therefore breaking down the parts of education as a whole.

Is education and training for “employability” therefore the magic key to overcome the crisis of structural unemployment and the dismantling of the salaried society?

In terms of mystification, the idea disseminated is that the *end of employment* is something positive for competitiveness and that, in reality, everyone stands to gain from it. This common sense is shared not only in the *airport literature*, but by the plans of neo-liberal governments, non-government organisations and institutions linked to the education system and professional training. In the government plans the notions of flexibility and deregulation mask the more blunt jargon of the prescription of the *human resource* consultants. The following text summarises the common sense that has been instigated in relation to the notion of employability and which shows its high degree of mystification.

Employability is a richer concept than job seeking or even the certainty of employment. It is a set of competencies that one is proven to possess or able to develop — inside or outside the company. It is the condition of feeling alive, capable, and productive. It is linked to you as an individual

and not the situation, good or bad, of the company — or the country. It is the opposite of the old dream of a lifelong job in a company. Today the only lifelong relationship should be with the content of your know-how. *The best thing a company can propose is the following: let's do this work together and it will be beneficial for the two of us while it lasts; it may end for reasons outside our control. (...) (employability) is what security is now called* (Moraes, 1998, p. 56).

The notions of *employability*, *workability* or *labour*, competencies, entrepreneurship and social capital, when put face to face with the reality, do not only bring to the fore their mixed nature, but, above all, they also reveal a high degree of cynicism. In effect, for the contingent of people — more than a billion in the world — who, as Forrester reminds us (1997), have the employment or occupation every day of the week, every week of the month and every month of the year, to look for employment, these notions present a promising human reality. In contrast, the cynicism hides behind the ideological discourse.

What the ideology of human capital and its rejuvenation through the notions of pedagogy of the competencies and social capital hides is the vicious circle of poverty. Poverty that is increased with the concentration of capital and the monopoly of science and technology as forces to enlarge the capital against the workers and which increasingly prevent thousands of people, as stated by Istvan Mészáros, from educating and developing themselves fully.

In the 1960s there were 30 poor people at the base of the socioeconomic pyramid for every rich person at the top of this pyramid. Today the figure is 74 poor people for each rich person. In 2015, the forecast is that the ratio will reach one hundred poor people for every rich person in the world. This is the official forecast of the United Nations⁵.

This allows us to affirm that these notions, so much in vogue today in the government directives concerning primary, middle and higher education and professional training, make it more difficult rather than helping us face the challenge of seeking alternatives to the capitalist social relations. On the other hand, most of the youth of today no longer believe in the promises of this schooling. Most do not believe that school today is a guarantee or a passport to a good job, but rather to precarious employment.

Not by chance, in the strategy called “governability”, from the 1980s onwards, the young entered the political agenda of the international bodies charged with maintaining the capital system. It is a question of seeking strategies that aim to annul the potential for rebellion and contestation of the young through mechanisms that range from political and cultural alienation to destruction, as happens in the large urban centres, especially in the capitalism dependent countries.

In Brazil there are currently over 50 programmes, projects or initiatives geared towards different groups of youths, in line with the social class and geopolitical space. In this background, the young, chiefly from the 1980s onwards, are the topic of conferences on a worldwide level, of the European community and of the Latin-American community, aimed at coming up with proposals about how to *integrate them* into the world job market.

THE *DISINTERESTED* SCHOOL AND ONTOLOGICAL CREATIVE WORK — THE DISPUTE OF THE ORGANISATIONS AND WORKING CLASS MOVEMENTS

The philosopher Istvan Mészáros (2000) in his most important work, *Beyond the Capital*, draws up the central thesis of the *exhaustion of the civilisational dimension of the capital* which now shows only its destructive face. This work was summed up by the British sociologist Daniel Singer, who invites us to think of the educational processes in a dimension that leads us on a daily basis to the policies backed up by the neo-conservative governments.

In truth, for some time now capitalism has lost its “civilisational” dimension as a ruthless but efficient organiser of work (...). Simply to go ahead by existing, the system is getting more and more lost in waste, in the “planned obsolescence”, in the production of weapons and in the development of the military complex. At the same time, its uncontrollable impulse for expansion has produced catastrophic effects for natural resources and the environment. None of this prevents the system from producing “superfluous work”, or to put it another way, mass unemployment. Moreover, as if to emphasise the seriousness of the current crisis, in the last twenty years capitalism has abolished all the concessions that, under the generic name of the Welfare State, supposedly justifies its existence (Singer, 1996, p. 6).

Is it possible to change school without changing the social relations which led to it and of which it is an essential part? Would it be better for the working class not to fight for the right to public schooling? In a small book — *Education beyond the capital* — Istvan Mészáros (2005) gives us an in-depth and critical reflection on the limits and mistakes of the liberal and utopian-liberal visions of education. These are visions that neglect to acknowledge that the educational processes and social processes of reproduction are closely linked. In other words, without breaching the social relations that are under the control of the capital system there can be no profound change in the education system. Under the capitalist social relations education functions, in the main, as a system of internalisation of the functional knowledge, values and culture for reproduction of the dis(order) of the metabolism of the capital system.

But Mészáros's analysis is not reproductive. Quite the opposite, it is profoundly dialectic. Grounded on the theoretical and political basis of the thinking of Marx, Lénin and Gramsci, and the specific experience of the Cuban revolution, he extracts from José Martí's thinking the direction and the tasks for educators who do not only want to reform the capital system, but to overcome it — “the solutions cannot be merely formal; they have to be essential” (Mészáros, 2005, p. 35). It is a question of constructing contra-hegemonic opposite educational thinking fighting against the internalisation and the awareness of subordination of the mercantile values through an emancipating education theory and praxis. This is possible because the capital system is not eternal and entails irremediable contradictions.

As stressed by Marx in relation to science, only the working class or *in the Republic of work* can one transform education into a popular force: “Only the working class can convert the science of domination (class rule) into a popular force (...). Science can only perform its genuine role in the Republic of work” (Marx, 1871, cited in Moura, 1998, p. 71).

Along the path and in the field of contradictions, the struggle of the working class and their organisations and movements and their intellectual sympathisers, is for basic schooling which, as Gramsci would say, is disinterested in the mercantile values and the skilling of the capitalist market. A school, therefore, that works on all the dimensions of the human being, which is geared towards work that creates useful values and expands free time.

This school is responsible, from the start, for the socialisation in the workplace — in its ontological creative dimension. In the same perspective the sense of ownership is implicit — material exchange between the human being and nature, to be able to maintain human life. Ownership, in its ontological sense, is the right of the human being, in relation and in solidarity with other human beings, to appropriate, create and recreate, through work — mediated through knowledge, science and technology — nature in order to produce and reproduce existence in all its dimensions. Hence, private ownership of means and instruments of production with the end goal of profit is an instrument of mutilation of human lives.

It is also, within this understanding, that we can perceive the relevance of science and technology when taken as producers of useful values in the task to improve the standard of living and the possibility of expanding free time or time for real human choice. In this perspective, science and technology enable the extension of the senses and members of human beings. The opposite direction, therefore, to the way that science and technology take on roles as forces of the capital metabolism in the intensification of the exploitation of the employee, the production of mass unemployment and the degradation of the bases of life through the destruction of the environment.

The centrality of work, as a praxis that enables the creation and recreation of the world, not only in material terms, but also within the scope of art and culture, language and symbols, is a response to the multiple and historical human needs that constitute *a training or educational principle*. Work as an *educational principle* derives from the fact that all human beings are natural beings, and therefore have the need to feed themselves, shelter themselves from the elements and create their means of living. It is fundamental to socialise, from childhood, the principle that the task of providing sustenance, and other spheres of life through work, is common to all human beings. One prevents, as such, the creation of individuals or groups who exploit and live off the work of others. These people, in the expression used by Gramsci, can be considered *luxury mammals* — beings from another species who think it is natural to exploit other human beings.

Work as an educational principle, therefore, is not to be confused with didactic and methodological techniques in the learning process, but an ethical-political principle⁶. Within this perspective work is, at the same time, a duty and a right. A duty because it is just that all collaborate in the production of the material, cultural and symbolic goods, which are fundamental for the production of human life. A right because the human being is a natural being who needs to establish, through his conscious action, a metabolism with the natural environment transforming it into the goods needed for production and reproduction.

In Brazil, the Landless Workers' Movement (*Movimento dos Sem Terra* — MST) is explicitly fighting for a school whose goal is the search, not to reform capitalism, but to develop values and knowledge to overcome it. Experience, knowledge managed in the production of life articulates with the knowledge and values developed in the school. Therefore, the bond between school and employment occurs from the perspective of production of useful values, albeit within the space of the dominant social relations of the production of exchange values. Today there are more than five thousand members undergoing training in public universities which, going against the flow, seek to accommodate them so that the educators can also be educated. It is not by chance that the MST has been systematically *demonised* by the Brazilian bourgeoisie, through the monopoly of the media and use of the legal and political apparatus. One third or more of Brazilian MPs are large landowners. Legal procedures are currently ongoing to outlaw the travelling schools of the MST camps, on the basis that these schools preach an ideological doctrine.

Likewise it is not by chance that the MST is the only social movement that systematically comes under attack. Certainly because the vast majority of its members, in their 25-year long fight and organisation, have gradually raised awareness that capitalism, since its origin, was built and developed *on the* and *for the* exploitation of the

employee. As such, in contrast to what the dominant discourse claims, labelling them as invaders, they are aware of the right to occupy land to reproduce their lives. It is not simply a case of seeking an agrarian reform within the capitalist philosophy, but putting into practice new social relations without the mark of private ownership of the means and tools of production in the county and in the city. The repeated persecution and violence suffered by the MST is centred on the fact that this movement understood, like science, that education also only in the *Republic of work* can perform its proper role.

As such, the MST believe that the educational processes are produced in the multiple practices and social relations and the school that is of interest is one that organises and socialises values, attitudes, knowledge and actions and which makes progress in relation to the possibility of the *Republic of work*. In it private ownership does not exist, nor do bosses, and everybody has the right and the duty to work. It is inside these social relations of production of life that actual free time can be increased — time for enjoyment, creation and choice — and the construction of a rich human diversity.

One can see therefore, that the motto born in the rich countries and spread all over the world — working less hours so that everyone can work — is the extreme of cynicism, because in exchange employees are being asked to accept a reduction in their salaries, an increase in their productivity and consequently enhancing the importance of the capital. The goal of the *Republic of work* is to produce on a large scale and with clean technology that preserves the life of the planet, whereby everybody has the duty to work productively. Hence the motto, paradoxically, is that everybody has to work, within the new social relations whose purpose is to lengthen free time. It is towards this goal that Mészáros stresses the need to fight for the universalisation of education which is inseparable from the struggle for the “universalisation of work as a self-fulfilling human activity” (Moura, 1998, p. 65). According to this author, it is a question of a task that cannot be delayed and whose goal has to be to join the fight to go beyond the capital system.

This possibility is more real than ever today. In other words, the objective conditions to expand free time are real and effective. What has still to be built are the underlying conditions, i.e. the policies, so that the great populations think in tune with the MST members and other social movements who are fighting for the same conception all over the world. The views of the school and their professionals who want to fall into line with this agenda covers two concomitant movements: to side with the social movements and their struggle and to exercise, in their area of responsibility, fierce criticism of the reforming governments and the international bodies, sentries and intellectuals of the capital system and their destructive and mutilating nature of human rights and lives.

Endnotes

1. The metaphor “infrastructure and suprastructure” has often been used for dichotomous, economicist and deterministic analyses. It uses the diverse good of the dialectic effort of thinking and the work of Marx and Engels.

2. Which is different from the perspective of modernisation, which conceives economic and socio-cultural development in a linear manner, and even from the analyses of the theory of dependence, which present asymmetry of power among countries. The concept of dependent capitalism explains the understanding of the alliance, albeit subordinated, of the capital owning classes of the peripheral countries and the capital owning classes of the hegemonic centres (on this point see Fernandes, 1975 and Oliveira, 2003).

3. For a more in-depth understanding of the ideological and circular character of the “theory of human capital” see Frigotto, 2006.

4. We refer here to the research on *Youths with little schooling and employment* coordinated by Natália Alves in Portugal and on *Sociability of dependent capitalism in Brazil and the public policies of training, employment and income: youths with a provisional life in suspension*, coordinated by Gaudêncio Frigotto, whose results were debated in the 3rd Portuguese-Brazilian seminar “Work, Education and Social Movements”, held in Lisbon in December 2008 and organised as part of the Project entitled *Work and training of youths and working adults with low levels of schooling. Policies and practices in Brazil and Portugal*, sponsored by the CAPES/GRICES agreement.

5. Interview in the *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper, 27 January 2003.

6. We stress this point, given that it is common to reduce work as an educational principle to the didactic or pedagogical idea of *learning by doing*. This does not omit the concrete work experience of the young and adults, or even children, as a basis on which to develop pedagogical processes or even practical activity as the pedagogical method. One of the classic texts as a pedagogical work is that of Pistrak (1981). In various countries, including Brazil, there is a network of schools that uses the “pedagogy of alternance” as a pedagogical strategy. This consists of experiments with schools in rural communities where the young alternate one period in school with another practising certain activities at home.

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