

Education of the young and adult workers in Brazil in the 21st century. The “new” that reiterates the old deprivation of rights

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ABSTRACT:

This text discusses the initiatives taken by the Federal Government with regard to the Education of The Young and Adult employees in Brazil, in the period from 2003 to 2006. It focuses on: the Factory School Project, the National Youth Inclusion Programme: Education, Qualification and Community Action (PROJOVEM), the Nation Programme of Integration of Professional Education with Basic Education for the Young and Adults (PROEJA) and the National Skills Certification Exam in Education of the Young and Adults (ENCCEJA). The analysis carried out assumes that the field of education is strongly marked by structural conditions and that government actions constitute an expression of processes of correlations of forces. An attempt is made, based on official documents, to show that these educational measures are one of the clearest expressions of the dual characteristic of the educational system of the country, which even today distributes access to basic knowledge in an extremely unequal manner.¹

KEYWORDS:

Education of the young and adult employees, educational policies, education and structural conditions, education of the working class.

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The current initiatives geared towards Education of the Young and Adult employees in Brazil, adopted by the Federal Government, are heavily influenced by two complementary socioeconomic issues. The first is the historical expression of the background of deeply unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources, as well as the denial of fundamental rights — among which of huge importance is the full right to education — for most the working class. The second, more recent issue, results from the internal repercussions of the productive restructuring as a consequence of the internationalisation of the capital and redefinition of the conditions of insertion in a country dependent on and subordinated to international capitalism from the end of the 1980s onwards. This panorama brought repercussions to the educational field with the resumption of the Theory of Human Capital, re-appropriated in similar ways by the State, Capital and Labour (Rummert, 2000, 2005a).

The country finds itself in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century with a low level of schooling of the population, as shown in the most recent Summary of Social Indicators disclosed by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2006). The summary states that in 2005 the country “had around 14.9 illiterate million people aged 15 or over”. It also says that “only 53.5% of pupils concluded the last year of fundamental education”. With regard specifically to the young, the document points out that “the proportion of young aged between 18 and 24 years attending school is extremely small. It is a *privilege* enjoyed by only 31.6% of people in this age

group” (my italics). Specifically with regard to Middle Education, the same Summary tells us that only 45.3% of the young aged between 15 and 18 years attended educational institutions in 2005.

In drawing attention to the fact that “in the Latin American context countries such as Argentina and Chile have only residual rates of illiteracy (around 3%)”, in contrast to the 11.7% registered in Brazil, the document highlights that the country is still far from making basic education universal. This gap, which cannot be explained through any determinist argument, is a result of the political and economic options that have marked the history of the country and which have had a decisive impact on education. In this background we cannot ignore the fact that the Brazilian working class has not constituted in recent decades a sufficiently strong social force in the struggle for the right to access and permanence throughout the entirety of the public and free Basic Education, and as such completion of Basic Education at the right age, continues to be a privilege, as pointed out by the government body itself².

The country is therefore in an apparent paradox. On the one hand it presents high indices of absolute and functional illiteracy, with low Fundamental Education completion rates, leading to even lower access to Middle Education, particularly among the young. This background has not however triggered, up to today, effective measures by the State to make Basic Education universal. On the other hand, following the strong hegemonic worldwide trend, the dominant discourses attribute to education the onus of hauling

the country up to a healthy position as regards the international economic panorama. Education is hence (re)presented as the way to overcome the asymmetries of power among the central countries and those that aspire to enter the hegemonic block, as well as between classes, sub-classes and individuals.

This has led, thanks to a blend of the current phase of expansion and consolidation of capital, to the resumption of ideological frameworks that cut through the last six decades and which were the object of a classic study by Anísio Teixeira (1962), in which he defined them as false concepts, described by him as mythical or magical, which at the time characterised the thinking about education in Brazil. It was a case, in this author's opinion, of attributing an absolute value to school and viewing formal education as an automatic means to social ascension. Teixeira stressed that there was a big gap between what he called the proclaimed values and the real values guiding the educational policies.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS IN TODAY'S GOVERNMENT ACTIONS FOR EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG AND ADULTS

Especially from the second half of the 1990s onwards, the country experienced the consequences of policies of macroeconomic adjustment and stabilisation. These policies led to high unemployment rates, resulting from the reduction of formal jobs that impacted even the most dynamic sectors of manufacturing. At the same time there was an accentuation and/or generation of several aspects leading to the growth of precarious, black-market, seasonal or outsourced employment, ready and waiting for the new groups of workers thrown out of the formal job market added to those already the victims of our historical legacy of subordinated and dependent capitalist accumulation.

Therefore, a background was worsened already described by Nosella, who analysed the relations between the modernisation of the productive processes and school education in the country. The author draws attention to the fact that Brazil's productive system is "an inorganic mixture of slavocrats and industrial forms" (1993, p. 161), which prevents an organically modern and developed society

from being built. What we are left with are illusions of modernity, which show themselves in tandem with the different forms of expression "of a non-organic productive system, stigmatised by slave labour, hence by non-modern labour" (Idem, p. 160). This particular cultural fabric, in which the archaic and the modern live alongside each other, are blended, and even often warped, leads to an unbalanced and contradictory framework that impresses "a deep historical rupture, that reaches the level of values, fantasy, national ethical-moral organicity" (Ibidem, p. 160).

These reflections lead one to the centrality of the hegemony category (Gramsci, 1978, 1980) which confers clear and specific outlines to the issue of education. On the one hand, the dominating forces characteristic of the current stage of capitalist production do not require, effectively, that the whole of the population has guaranteed access to the right to full basic and quality education (Rummert, 1995, 2000). On the other hand, the widespread belief that education plays a key role in generating a successful "competitive economy" (Rodrigues, 1998) requires the supply of simulated educational processes that instil a belief in the majority of the population that they are receiving, from the State, opportunities to better themselves individually in socioeconomic terms. Intertwined into the social fabric the dominant identifying project (Rummert, 2000, 2004), makes it necessary to implement actions that, in issuing certificates for completing fundamental and middle education and professional training, contribute significantly towards building the "active consent of the governed" (Gramsci, 1978).

While, on the one hand, the belief in the mythical or magical sense of education is deepened today, we cannot ignore the fact that does not constitute a characteristic exclusive to our time or to Brazil. In his classic work on the English working class, Thompson (1987) showed that workers for a long time viewed education as the supposedly easiest way to change their living conditions. As an example he highlights records dated to the end of the 18th century of claims for the "right to education, so that *the son of the worker can climb 'to the top of the social ladder'*" as documented at the time (p. 176) (my italics).

In a recent and detailed study on the representations of Portuguese youths concerning the relationship between school and the supposedly suc-

successful insertion into the productive system, Alves (2006) states, in analysing the data obtained from 9th school year pupils, that they expressly believe in the “individual progress myth — expressed in the statement ‘it’s worthwhile studying to be successful in life’” (Idem, p. 30). In the conclusion of her work, the author highlights the “faith, which in general the young have in education and in the way they uncritically take on board the premises that structure the discourses on Education and Employment”. She also points out that the opinions collected from the young “cannot be understood as anything other than a reflection of the triumph of the technical-instrumental vision of education and evidence that critical and political reflection on the role of education in society has been confined to a background role” (Ibidem, p. 74).

The Brazilian case is no different, and it shows that the strategies of the dominant forces for the permanent construction and maintenance of the hegemony, which transfer responsibility for a greater or lesser degree of success in the struggle for basic living conditions to the individual, are also adopted in a non-critical manner. In an intricate process of distribution of illusions, governments successively seek to face up to the complexity of the social structure, which requires action that treats different class segments according to their protesting and organisational power. The most fragile and vulnerable segments of the working class are the target of policies that are equally fragile and which are liable to be discarded in the short term. The segments of class that have a greater capacity to apply pressure, either real or potential, in the play of forces, are the object of more complex measures which nevertheless, remain disguised and restricted to constraints of a similar kind that do not effectively intend to bring about any change. We therefore constantly come back to the maxim of Tomaso di Lapedusa, in *O Leopardo*: “It’s necessary to change so that everything can remain the same”.

THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG AND ADULT WORKERS IN BRAZIL TODAY

Analysis of the actions directed at the education of the young and adult workers in the period from 2003

to 2006, during which President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva served his first mandate, showed that little was actually done to promote universal basic education in Brazil. This is particularly noticeable in Fundamental Education and access to Middle Education, which, as stated in the IBGE document, is still a privilege.

Meanwhile, several focal initiatives have been implemented, geared towards small population groups that given their weaknesses as political actors are granted the chance to improve their precarious and low level of schooling, which are announced as measures to encourage social inclusion. This is above all an urgent effort to control the dysfunctions of a system that, owing to its structural origin, will continue to generate an increasing need for new emergency measures.

In accordance with this perspective, the Federal Government, especially through the Ministry of Education (ME), Ministry of Employment (MEM) and Secretary-General of the Presidency of the Republic, has in the last four years defined policies and adopted different measures that aim to adjust education to the project of subordinated productive restructuring in the backdrop of the international hegemony. It is in this background that the initiatives geared towards basic and professional education of the young and adults of the most underprivileged working class come to the fore.

The Education of the Young and Adults (EYA), regulated as an educational measure, is without doubt a class education. As such, in Brazil it is viewed as providing the chance to better one’s schooling for those who were denied the right to education in the phase of their lives historically considered appropriate. More precisely, it is an education for the working class segments whose roles in the productive scenario do not require bigger investments from the State, while they represent the foremost interests of the owners of the means of production. This purpose is not admitted in Statement no. 11 of the year 2000, of the National Education Council, which oversees the Curricular Directives for Education of the Young and Adults. However, the same Statement, in attributing the function of repairing a social divide to EYA, illustrates this class destination.

The nature of education with an inferior “status” in the market of cultural goods conferred to the

Education of the Young and Adults, is also clearly illustrated in the National Education Basis and Directives Law no. 9 394 of 1996. With just two articles focussing on EYA, the text mentions the need to offer the young and adults “appropriate educational opportunities, considering the characteristics of the pupils, their interests, living and working conditions” (LDB 9.394/96, Art. 37). Meanwhile, the young from the more underprivileged working class have been hit hard by the reduction of the age limit to take the so-called supplemental exams³. In Fundamental Education the minimum age to take the exams was lowered from 18 to 15 years, and in Middle Education from 21 to 18 years (Idem, Art. 38). This legal device, which led to children from 14 years of age being expelled from Fundamental Education at regular daytime school, illustrates the emphasis attributed to certification instead of the full experience of the pedagogical processes needed for the actual mastering of the basic scientific and technological knowledge.

The legislation therefore ratified both the subordination of the workers’ education to the capital interests in its current phase of accumulation, and the valuing of measures that change the low schooling statistical indicators of the population without actually offering quality education for most of the working class. Another essential aspect that must be stressed consists of the transfer of responsibility in relation to the public right to education (a right which the workers have) from the State to public non-state and private entities based on mechanisms of partnership and/or philanthropy through different initiatives, with emphasis on the Non Government Organisations, always of a compensatory nature.

The focus on the legal tools derives from the understanding of what power of expression the social forces represent that dispute the hegemony in a given moment of history, given that the legislation is an expression of correlations of forces. They represent, therefore, a fundamental tool for formulating and carrying out public policies, which, as pointed out by Rua (1998), comprise the “set of decisions and actions destined to solve political problems”. This perspective obliges us to state that neither the Brazilian youth in particular, nor society as a whole, fully accepts the task of fighting for the right to education, and hence do not create political problems

for the ruling forces to ensure the universal conditions of access and permanence in school and the right to good quality basic education for all.

FOCAL ACTIONS TO MINIMISE EFFECTS OF STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY

As class education, EYA as a way of raising the schooling and qualification of the workers is presented as a generator of more job opportunities. As stated by Marx (1984), initiatives like these derive from the understanding that the labour force, taken as a good, is able on its own to enlarge its exploitation possibilities through the capital.

In line with this perspective, in the seeking to answer the concrete problems such as socioeconomic inequality, which is inherent to the capitalist system, the knowledge produced at the limits of conservative or even reformist thinking views the problems as mere dysfunctions of the system, resulting from measures that constantly try to lessen the consequences but not to eliminate the underlying structural causes.

It is undeniable that since 2003, EYA has instigated a much higher number of initiatives than in previous government periods. However, these initiatives are presented as clear consequences of the predefined strategies. The centrality of the actions lies in the expansion of certification mechanisms for completion of Fundamental Education, professional training — particularly of an initial character that does not require minimum schooling, as outlined in the current legislation — and less emphasis on finishing Middle Education. The government actions are also restricted to modest quantitative targets that do not make an impact on the huge population segment without complete schooling. Moreover, there is the clear absence of a unified and fertile policy that is geared towards the effective democratisation of access to basic scientific and technological knowledge and not to the mere improvement of the schooling indicators of the working class deprived of the right to education.

Among these initiatives particularly noteworthy are the Factory School Project, the National Youth Inclusion Programme (PROJOVEM), the Programme of Integration of Professional Education with Middle Education for the Young and Adults

(PROEJA) and the National Skills Certification Exam for the Young and Adults (ENCCEJA), which we shall tackle briefly based on official documents.

Factory School Project

The Factory School Project⁴ intends to offer initial training courses lasting a minimum of 600 hours to 10 000 young people a year, in 500 Training Unites created in companies, each one serving 20 pupils. The intention is to enable the young aged between 15 and 21 years and belonging to families with income per capita less than or equal to the minimum wage to be included socially through professional training.

The youths are initially enrolled only if registered in the regular public education system, in the final stages of fundamental education or middle education (aged between 15 and 18 years), as well as having completed literacy in the Literacy Brazil Programme or registered in the Education of the Young and Adults programme for those up to 21 years old. These youths shall receive, throughout the six months (the duration of the course) an Auxiliary Allowance equal to half the minimum wage, funded in the first two years of the Project by the Ministry of Education (ME), aimed at stimulating companies to take part.

The ME initiative is under the direct supervision of the Secretary of Professional Education and Technology. In addition to the Ministry, the Managing Units or Institutions are also responsible for the Factory School, and are in charge of implanting the Project in the companies. This responsibility consists of managing the allocated resources, designing the pedagogical conception of the Project, implementing it and monitoring it, preparing and distributing the didactic material, training the instructors and raising awareness in relation to the initiative and selecting the candidates, certifying the pupils, monitoring them and assessing the process. Considered potential Management Units are public or private entities, Non Government Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations of Public Interest (OSCIPEs) or other institutions that are formally non profit making and have proven experience in managing educational or social projects.

The Training Units are large, medium or small companies, of any nature, including service pro-

viders responsible for food manufacturing and rural enterprises. In accordance with the Project, the companies are the owners of the educational environment needed to train the participating youths. They are responsible for costing the “school environment” (classroom and facilities needed) setting up what is needed, the uniforms, feeding and transport of pupils, yielding the employees that will be the instructors and also indicating the professional training needs which the pedagogical projects are based on.

Also explicitly mentioned are the Institutions of Professional Education and Technology which are to provide backup to the Managing Institutions (or even to act as managers), aiding the creation of courses, the methodological design, the training of instructors, the preparation of pedagogical material, as well as the assessment and certification. The project therefore encompasses Federal educational institutions working for the business community, carrying out pedagogical work directly linked to its interests, expressed in the curricular organisation, whose contents they define.

It is also pointed out that the document referring to the Factory School Project announces that it intends, with the undertaking, to cause the following impacts in society: a) “social inclusion of the young from 16 to 21 years of age with low income, through professional training and widening the possibilities of insertion into the job market”; b) “recognition of the educational principle of the productive spaces”; c) “increase in the social responsibility of the Brazilian business community” (MEC/SETEC, 2005, p. 3).

The “romantic” perspective expressed by the ME document in referring to social responsibility of the Brazilian business community is centred on the ideas that antagonism between classes has been overcome, and announces the humanisation of capital in favour of the working class. Therefore, the relations between capital and labour today supposedly embrace cooperation and solidarity as an expression of the social conscience of the businessman, which have no place for power struggles or antagonism.

The real meaning of this perspective is unveiled by the president of the Iochpe Foundation, which runs a project whose structure was reproduced in its entirety by the Factory School. Evelyn Iochpe talks

of the need for the business world to carry out social initiatives: “One therefore falls back on the law of social responsibility as stated by Keith Davis: ‘in the long term, *those who do not use power* in a way that society considers responsible, *will tend to lose this power*” (Iochepe, 1998) (my italics).

This panorama illustrates that the ME, incorporating the parameters of the current order established by the capital system, executes a double outsourcing movement: on the one hand it outsources to institutions of different kinds, transferring public resources to them to carry out educational work (that should be the responsibility of the Ministry) for working class youths; on the other hand it outsources the management of the educational action to the business world that focuses on the immediate interests in relation to the workforce and mediates with regard to initiatives that combine to maintain the hegemony of the capital. We are therefore in the presence of an example of what Ramonet referred to: “The public powers are nothing, in the best of cases, other than company outsourcers. The market governs. The government manages” (1998, p. 60).

PROJOVEM^c

The National Youth Inclusion Programme: Education, Qualification and Community Action (PROJOVEM^b), was set up in Brazil in 2005 and is directly supervised by the Secretary-General of the Presidency of the Republic. It is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Employment and Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger.

According to the document that presents the programme, PROJOVEM is “geared towards the most vulnerable section of the young population which is left out of the public policies in effect” (Presidency of the Republic, 2005). The target group is 18 to 24-year-olds with more than 4 years of schooling but who did not complete the other 8 years of Fundamental Education, and who do not have a formal employment contract.

PROJOVEM intends to provide the participants with integrated completion of Fundamental Education, professional qualification and ability to carry out community actions aimed at “civic engagement” (Idem). The Programme is also attrib-

uted the possibility of contributing specifically to the reinsertion of youths into school, in Middle Education, although vacancies in the public education networks are not the object of the enlargement needed to deal with the demands presumably generated by the Programme. Also announced is the intention to teach IT skills as a tool for production insertion, ignoring the fact that only 15% of all Brazilian youths have access to computers (IPEA, 2006), and this group does not include the low-income population segment, which PROJOVEM is aimed at. This set of targets should be achieved in a 5-hour daily course lasting 12 uninterrupted months. Enrolled pupils are yielded a monthly allowance of BRL 100.00 (around 35 euros).

It is also important to point out that the Programme serves the capitals of the 26 Brazilian states, 34 other municipalities of the metropolitan regions and the capital of the country. The official justification for this geographical limitation lies in the dense concentration of youths denied their fundamental rights in the metropolitan regions, and also derives from the “combination of economic hardship, the presence of drug trafficking and police corruption” (Idem) in these regions.

These arguments are heavily influenced by a strong association in the social imagination between the “poor” young and the so-called dangerous “classes”. In the opinion of the most privileged sections of society, youths coming from the working classes are potential criminals, thus constituting a serious danger to social order. The idea that youths from the poorest of the working class are easy prey for the world of crime is explicitly voiced, even by the professionals involved in the Programme. As an example we can quote the general coordinator of PROJOVEM in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Pedro Veiga, who said in an interview given to the Young Observatory: “BRL 100.00 will not keep a youth in any programme, especially at this age. Trafficking or black-market or illegal work of any kind pays much more than that. The BRL 100 is literally just an allowance for the participant’s travel or eating expenses — despite the fact lunch is included in the project — it’s a help.” (Available at: www.uff.br/ob-sjovem).

As already mentioned, PROJOVEM aims to provide, in just one year, the knowledge needed

to complete Fundamental Education and professional training. The intention, as announced in the base document, is to provide the conditions to enable youths to “understand and social processes and scientific and technological principles that sustain production today” (Presidency of the Republic, 2005). Although we cannot here analyse the real pedagogical feasibility of these intentions, it is not difficult to understand that it is impossible to achieve these goals and ensure that all those taking part in the Programme have access to the basics of the scientific and technological knowledge in such a short space of time, especially if we consider that the curricular organisation of the Programme includes just two classroom hours a week to study Portuguese, two for a foreign language and the same allocated time for mathematics, human sciences and natural sciences. The other three hours a day are occupied with professional training, IT basics and community action.

Another aspect to be highlighted in the document is the profile of the young that have “restricted access to quality education and fragile conditions to remain at school” as well as “low access to sports, leisure and cultural activities” (Presidency of the Republic, 2005), which is backed up by the subsequent presentation of statistical data about the schooling of the young. These statements are dealt with in the document as inherent traits of a large part of the population and not as an exemplification of the social injustice of the country and the absence of effective policies from the public powers to encourage equal rights.

Throughout the text, as in the many official presentations of the Programme, repeated references are made to the young as protagonists. It is therefore supposed that the young, in fully exercising their public rights, recognise that they are entitled to these rights, among which the right to a good quality basic education, regardless of their class. No other expectations can be read into statements such as “accepting responsibilities for the problems that affect the country” or “identifying problems and needs of the community, and planning and participating in concrete initiatives aimed at overcoming them”.

As the overcoming of problems like those mentioned above requires widespread mobilisation of society against the political-economic options that

guide the policies implemented by the Federal Government, it is legitimate to look into the characteristics and constraints of community action planned for the young within the scope of the Programme supervised by the State’s agencies.

This question is clearly answered in another statement by Pedro Veiga in the interview mentioned above:

“The project therefore has the goal that the young undertake a set of activities in the community, which represent an immediate individual gain from the moment they start to relate in a different way to the community and for the community, obviously. There will be, therefore [for example] 1 200 youths in one weekend per month undertaking a big community activity; recreation with children, clarification with regard to drugs, clarification with regard to sex, or doing some other activity. If [the target is] concerned with civil construction, it will be possible to have, within 3 months, 1 200 youths painting the school, laying the pavement. The purpose of the project is to interconnect improvement plans, training and community action in an integrated manner” (Available at: www.uff.br/obsjovem).

This is, therefore, in the case of PROJOVEM, a kind of community action restricted to sporadic demands, exercised by the young in supervised time and which adds nothing or little to their integral education, in contrast to that announced in the document of the Presidency of the Republic. It is expected, therefore, that the young paint public buildings, build precarious residences or lay pavements, occupying themselves as helpers in the so-called “needy communities”. In other words, the community action expected is situated in the vacuum left by the public power itself, limited by the social order established, in return for payment of a fraction of the monthly sum received as an auxiliary. It is also worth pointing out that for the “community” where this action takes place, the sporadic initiatives will not bring meaningful or lasting changes to the precarious living conditions.

It is also easy to verify the flaws in the argument that one of the positive aspects of the Programme is the access it gives to the basics of scientific and technological knowledge. This access should oc-

cur based on pedagogical action that integrates the three aspects of the Programme: improving the school level, professional training and community action. In reality, the narrow group of activities, restricted to demarcated and arbitrary limits, and confined to minimising some of the many expression of “poverty”, frustrates the expectations created in relation to the community action. Analysis of the PROJOVEM proposal and its implementation reveals that it invites the young to engage in a project that predetermines their future in already established models for the most exploited members of the working class. Likewise, the few hours set aside for general and professional training show that for most of the participants the experience proved by the project will be far from enriching.

Another aspect also to be mentioned is the backward step the implementation of PROJOVEM has represented regarding the hard-fought conquest obtained by education professionals in transferring educational actions from social welfare agencies to those actually involved in education. There is now a further transfer of resources and responsibilities to the social welfare sphere, confirming a process that had already been identified in different studies, most notably in that of Pochmann (2006).

As such, PROJOVEM represents a loss for education given that, as well as its social care nature, it represents an initiative that does not provide the young with effective access to education, but only certification of completion of Fundamental Education of dubious quality. PROJOVEM constitutes another example of political action which, under the guise of innovation, generates continued submission to the instituted order. And the instituted order, in Brazil, is the generator of socioeconomic differences that are increasingly extensive and deep-rooted. In analysing the Programme presented by the Federal Government as the key element of its national policy for the Brazilian youth, we can understand that it does not present the expressed commitment to democratisation and universalisation of education that involves, in a common and organic direction, the whole of society. To the contrary, it stresses once again the dual character of the Brazilian educational system, as an expression of the socioeconomic structure of the country.

PROEJA

Another initiative to examine is the National Programme of Integration of Professional Education with Basic Education for the Young and Adults (PROEJA), which we now give a preliminary analysis of. PROEJA was instituted by Decree 5 478 of 2005, and subsequently reformulated by Decree 5 840 of 2006. According to this last Decree, PROEJA covers the following courses and professional education programmes: a) initial and ongoing training, which can be articulated with raising schooling at Fundamental Education level; b) medium level technical professional education, which can occur in an integrated manner or simultaneously with the raising of schooling in the Middle Education level.

The first legal document made it compulsory for all the Federal Centres of Technological Education (CEFETs), the Federal Technical and Agricultural-Technical Schools and Technical Schools linked to Federal Universities to provide PROEJA Programmes. It was also established that of all the vacancies opened in all the courses of each educational unit in 2005, 10% should be destined for this project, with the ME reserving the right to define new percentages in subsequent years. The creation of the Programme therefore did not lead to the enlarged access, but caused a shift of the vacancies already existing at all levels of each unit to serve the new action, given that the vacancies were provided in place of the creation of other classes of students.

Another aspect of Decree 5 478/2005 to mention illustrates the EYA conception within the ME itself and refers to the establishment of a maximum hourly load of 1 600 hours for initial and ongoing training courses and 2 400 for technical professional education middle-level courses. The cap on the maximum number of hours, as well as the reduction in courses usually run, were also assessed by Frigotto *et al.*

“We observed a degree of incoherence in the stipulation regarding the hourly load, which in our opinion incorporated ethical, political and pedagogical faults. First, there is no reason to define maximums. The reduction of the hourly load of courses for EYA in relation to the minimums established by law for regular education should not be an imposition, but

rather a possibility (...) Limiting the hourly load of the courses to a 'maximum' is, in truth, admitting that the young and adult workers can be provided with a minimum training" (Frigotto *et al.*, 2005a, pp. 318-9)

Among other highly problematic aspects, also pointed out is the fact that the Programme has been implemented without the necessary backup measures compatible with a public policy. Only at the end of 2005 was a Working Group set up to prepare the PROEJA Base Document, disclosed in 2006. This document merits some comments that explain the ambivalent nature of the proposal.

The first is the enlargement of the spectrum of institutions that can provide PROEJA programmes, on top of those defined in the first Decree, nominated as in Proponent Institutions (public sector: Federal, State and Municipal Education Institutions, as well as Secretaries of Education) and Partnership Institutions, referred to as "any organisations of civil society that set up the Programme course as a non-profit venture". The document meanwhile earmarks "institutions belonging to the S System as *preferential partners*"⁶ (Proeja, Base Document, p. 55. *my italics*), clearly going against the presuppositions announced in the preamble of the same document and showing a strong capacity for intervention by the Capital in the education proposals of the working class presented by the Federal Government.

Another aspect explicitly outlines the hybrid nature of the theoretical-political grounding of the Base Document. Its authors, in presenting the principles that should guide PROEJA, state that the "fourth principle understands work as an educational principle" (Ibidem, p. 35), understood not in its employment perspective, but as a form of constituting humanity itself. This principle, however, conflicts directly with the conception of work as an educational principle, as perceived by the "preferential partners" selected by the ME: the businessmen that regulate the training of employees according to the immediate needs of the market.

It cannot be ignored that the document simultaneously incorporates references to radical (radical) criticisms with regard to the current state of the mode of production and theses and concepts entirely in accordance with the order. An expressive exam-

ple is the repeated reference to "life-long education". Here there is an absence of the perception of its conservative character subordinated to the market logic, as shown by Canário when, in a rich discussion on the topic, he highlights in the proposal the grounding of the "argumentative logic: the functional subordination of the education and training policies to the dominant economic reasoning, based on the production and accumulation of wealth in the form of an impatient and insatiable trend towards accumulation of capital" (Canário, 2003, p. 195).

As we have seen, PROEJA appears reformulated and enlarged in the middle of a set of contradictions that have to be delved into deeply to be fully understood. In any event, it should be pointed out that despite the many limits deriving from a subordinated and dependent society project, the Programme constitutes an initiative that, in being carried out, may give rise to some progress in the field of Education of the Young and Adult Workers, in particular through initiatives implemented through the CEFETs and other federal public schools as outlined in the original Decree.

ENCCEJA

We complete this analysis on the actions of the Federal Government in relation to the Education of the Young and Adult Workers with a brief reference to the National Skills Certificates Exam for the Young and Adults (ENCCEJA), which comprises an "assessment tool to ascertain the knowledge and skills of the young and adults" (INEP, 2005). Its first version was presented by the National Institute of Studies and Educational Research (INEP), linked to the Ministry of Education at the end of 2002, still under the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. In October 2004, the new government, in opting to implement actions only apparently new, instituted the National Education Assessment Exam for the Young and Adults, through Decree no. 3 415. In March 2005, after insignificant reformulations in its content, the Exam was implemented through Decree no. 44, of the same body, and became part of the set of assessment tools of Basic Education in Brazil.

A first aspect to point out is the fact that this national exam, in contrast to the others, is the only one which enables certification, at the level of Fundamental or Middle Education, of the young and

adults without the aforementioned schooling level. The intention is therefore to “enable an assessment of knowledge and basic skills of the young and adults in accordance with the legal stipulations, *which focus on the needs and profile of this population* which has not had the opportunity to access regular schooling at the appropriate age” (INEP, 2005) (my italics).

Therefore, the overriding function of ENCCEJA is to certify the young and adults who did not attend regular basic school but who need to prove that they have the equivalent knowledge of the schooling levels of Basic Education. The substance of this need, as tackled in the documents referred to herein, attributes value to the “diploma” in place of the value of knowledge. This can be confirmed in comparing the degree of complexity and amplitude of the knowledge assessed by ENCCEJA and by the National Exam of Middle Education (ENEM). The latter, in force since 1998, is destined for those who attend regular school. Although the documents relative to ENCCEJA state that both exams are structured based on the same “framework of skills”, what can be gleaned from the comparison is that ENCCEJA, instead of the actual learning, reinforces the symbolic significance of the certificate, contributing to expanding its “exchange value”. Its purpose therefore enables certificates to be obtained for completing courses and instead of providing conditions for access to knowledge.

Comparison of the aims attributed to ENCCEJA and to ENEM also allows recognition of the duality of the educational system. According to Decree 06, of February 2005, INEP defines as one of the aims of ENEM, “the provision of a reference so that each citizen can proceed with his/her self-assessment with a view to their *future choices*, whether in relation to the job market or in relation to *continuing studies*” (INEP, Decree 06, Article 2, Point I) (my italics). For the public it is destined for, ENCCEJA is attributed the aim of “constituting a national self-assessment reference for the young and adults through assessment of knowledge and skills acquired at school or in the learning processes occurring in family life, socialisation, in the workplace, social movements or civil society organisations” (INEP, Decree 44, Art. 2, Point I).

The comparison between the two aims allows us to understand the differences that characterise

what is intended by the two exams, which are geared towards population segments marked by socio-economic differences. For those for whom the State did not fulfil the right to Basic Education, i.e. those belonging to the poorest sections of the working class, neither the “possibility to choose” nor “the continuation of studies” are considered.

Moreover, according to the INEP documents, the skills to be ascertained correspond to the “basic cognitive bedrocks, the mental actions and operations that the young and adults should develop as *minimum resources* that enable them to better face the world that surrounds them” (Basic Document, Introductory Book, 2003, p. 15) (my italics). Once again official documents convey the idea that it is legitimate to consider the minimum for the working class segment who are denied the right to access to school, as in other initiatives mentioned earlier.

CONCLUSION

Aimed at not causing structural changes to the social order, measures are implemented that attempt to minimise, in a superficial manner, the consequences of the political-economic options of the ruling forces, conditioned by corporate interests of the capital and by the subordinated alignment of the country to the international hegemonic panorama. As such, the Federal Government adopts philanthropic democratic procedures, of a demonstrative character, in which focal policies proliferate, and programmes emerge that offer allowances or other kind of aid and request symbolic exchanges in a clearly neo-liberal model.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that in contrast to that proffered by the official discourse, the initiatives mentioned do not constitute the announced innovation. In contrast, in line with repeatedly used practices by the circles of power, they are presented, sometimes under a new guise, as emergency actions to fill the enormous gaps left by the absence of policies promoting the universal dissemination of rights. Moreover, they show that the current government has not opted, up to now, for policies that will have a lasting impact to overcome the structural inequalities that characterise Brazil, and in turn education in the country.

The history of Brazilian education shows that such measures do not provide concrete and long-term answers to the ethical-political imposition of universal access and objective conditions allowing everybody to remain in quality school education, regardless of their origin or class. In reiterating the use of the category of working class we refer to those who have not obtained their right to education, constituting a theoretical-methodological option that does not abdicate the need to stress the fact, today denied, that unequal distribution of educational opportunities continues to be a question derived from socioeconomic origin and the resulting asymmetries of power.

The content of the actions described herein explicitly show that the proposals geared to the young poor that are supposedly in a so-called “social risk situation”, are designed so that they remain at the bottom of the socioeconomic pyramid, receiving training that shall predetermine a future resigned to the social order which is not intended to be changed.

The perspective generating such measures is structured on false premises, among which one can highlight the naturalisation of poverty and the linear relation between schooling and the individual overcoming inequalities. These great mythical or magic maxims, that the dominating forces disseminate on a wide scale, taking advantage of the mass communication means as preferential allies, constitute in the processes of correlations of forces more than the illusion of the announced inclusion. They are — despite the concrete evidence to the contrary presented in everyday life — like social control devices, contributing decisively to the non-critical adoption of the society project which increasingly favours those who hold power, or in the words of Forrester (1997), feed the (or are fed by) the “economic horror”.

Any initiative that intends to build concrete possibilities to overcome or even reduce inequalities, even if as highlighted by Oliveira (1998), within the framework and shackles of capitalism, cannot come from proposals that so clearly push away the idea of a universal education.

We cannot nurture the illusion that restricted and “focussed” measures will change, in the slightest, the background of duality that marks Brazilian education as an expression of our contradictory crossed internal histories and the globalisation of capital. It is also obvious that there is no room in the training proposed through the initiatives analysed for rebellious thinking that contributes to weakening the bases of the self-reforming capitalism” (Mészáros, 2002, p. 38).

To finish, we think it’s important to point out that the considerations presented here were not born out of the epistemological naivety that would lead one to suppose that the capital system is promoting education that is actually of interest to the workers and can, therefore, contribute voluntarily to the corrosion of its very bases (Rummert, 1995). Conquering this education is a task to be faced by the working class itself. Likewise, we understand that it serves no useful purpose to merely undertake a “denouncement spectacle”.

Nevertheless, as Brunhoff stresses, “although we have little audience at the moment, critical analysis of the liberal dogmas should continue, attempting to situate them in relation to what the author understands today as social practices” (1991, p. 9). Although we live today in what is called a neo-liberal or post-modern era, this does not make Adam Smith’s maxim any less relevant, albeit metamorphasised, (1983): “instruction for workers, although in homeopathic doses”. We therefore consider that bringing guises that sustain this reality into the light of day can contribute to a process of building substantial change in the life of the working class.

ENDNOTES

1. This text presents the partial results of the *Basic and professional education of workers* research. Public Policies and actions of the State, Labour and Capital, undertaken with the support of CNPq.

2. In Brazil Basic Education, in accordance with the legal tools, is made up of Fundamental Education, which lasts eight years and Middle Education, which lasts three years. It is pointed out that today it is not compulsory to attend Middle Education and that the number of vacancies in the public education networks is substantially fewer than the demand.

3. The Supplemental Exams are tests applied by the Municipal or State Secretary of Education aimed at providing the young and adults that did not complete Fundamental or Middle Education with the equivalent certification.

4. The documents on which the analysis is based are available at: <http://portal.mec.gov.br/setec/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=479&Itemid=602> (01-2007). For further information on the School Factory Project see: Rummert (2005b), a work on which the considerations herein presented were developed.

5. PROJOVEM was analysed in Rummert's work. Sonia Maria (2007) *Community interventions for social control in Brazilian society: the case of PROJOVEM*, presented at the International Intervention Congress with Children, the Young and Families. Braga, Minho University. 8 to 10 February 2007. This presentation highlighted the issues relative to community intervention, as planned in the Project.

6. The so-called "S System" originated under the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas, when the National Service of Industrial Learning (SENAI) was created. It today comprises of entities linked to the Confederations that represent the different productive sectors of the business world (manufacturing, business, agriculture, transport, among others) aimed at qualifying and providing culture and leisure activities to workers. The organisations of the "S" System are: the National Service of Industrial Learning (SENAI), the Social Service of Industry (SESI), the National Service of Business Learning (SENAC), the Social Service of Trade (SESC), the National Service of Rural Learning (SENAR), the National Service of Learning in Transports (SENAT), the

Social Service of Transports (SEST), the Brazilian Service of Support to Small and Medium-sized Companies (SEBRAE) and the National Service of Learning of Cooperatives (SESCOOP). It is essential to stress that the S System is funded with what are "parafiscal" resources, collected by the Welfare State and returned to the different Confederations. These resources are considered public, given that the companies consider it another contribution, and as such their value is computed in the final price of the products and services. This procedure means the onus for maintenance of the S System lies with the Brazilian population. A detailed study on its origins, linked to the National Confederation of Industry and on what it effectively represents as a disseminator of the ideology needed for capital, can be found in Rodrigues (1998).

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