

Caracterização docente: análise dos microdados do Censo Escolar¹

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RESUMO

A partir da concepção do materialismo histórico-dialético, esta pesquisa analisou os microdados do Censo Escolar do Estado de Minas Gerais em relação à caracterização docente na Educação Básica, através dos indicadores sociais referentes à formação e atuação docente nas etapas de ensino que vão da Educação Infantil-Creche ao Ensino Fundamental I, nos anos de 2010 a 2020. Buscou-se problematizar, por intermédio dos microdados do Censo Escolar, como as dimensões políticas, sociais, teóricas e relacionais constituem-se em facetas no processo de esvaziamento profissional. Para tanto, os procedimentos metodológicos da pesquisa se valeram de um delineamento quantitativo e qualitativo, através da estatística descritiva, bem como da ferramenta *Software*, pacote estatístico para as ciências sociais (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* - SPSS). Nas considerações, destacou-se que a formação e atuação docente envoltas em condições de esvaziamento inviabilizam ao professor ter uma formação com atuação significada.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Atuação docente. Condições de esvaziamento. Formação significada.

¹ This article is an excerpt from the master's thesis entitled "Conditions of Teacher Depletion: An Analysis Based on the School Census Microdata of the State of Minas Gerais", published by the authors. We extend our thanks to the Foundation for Research Support of the State of Minas Gerais (FAPEMIG) for its support – FAPEMIG.

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Teacher characterization: analysis of school census microdata

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on historical-dialectical materialism, this study examines teacher characterization in Basic Education through an analysis of School Census microdata from Minas Gerais State, Brazil (2010-2020). Focusing on social indicators of teacher training and practice across educational stages (from Early Childhood Education/Daycare to Elementary School I), the research interrogates how political, social, theoretical, and relational dimensions contribute to processes of professional devaluation. Employing a mixed-methods approach that combines descriptive statistics with qualitative analysis using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), the study reveals how conditions of professional marginalization undermine the potential for meaningful teacher development and practice. The findings demonstrate that when teacher training and professional practice occur within contexts of systemic devaluation, educators are effectively prevented from achieving professionally meaningful engagement.

KEYWORDS: Teacher practice. Professional marginalization. Meaningful professional development.

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RESUMEN

A partir de la concepción del materialismo histórico-dialéctico, esta investigación analizó microdatos del Censo Escolar del Estado de Minas Gerais en relación con la caracterización de los docentes de Educación Básica, a través de indicadores sociales relacionados con la formación y desempeño docente en las etapas docentes que abarcan desde Educación Jardín-Guardería hasta Escuela Primaria I, en los años 2010 a 2020. Se buscó problematizar, a través de microdatos del Censo Escolar, cómo las dimensiones política, social, teórica y relacional son facetas en el proceso de vaciamiento profesional. Para ello, los procedimientos metodológicos de la investigación utilizaron un diseño cuantitativo y cualitativo, a través de estadística descriptiva, así como la herramienta *Software*, paquete estadístico para las ciencias sociales (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - SPSS*). En las consideraciones se destacó que la formación docente y el desempeño rodeado de condiciones de vacío imposibilitan que el docente tenga formación con acción significativa.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Actividad docente. Condiciones de vaciado. Significado del entrenamiento.

Introduction

To analyze the processes and conditions of depletion within teacher education and professional practice represents, for us, a challenge of unveiling the material, social, and relational conditions that significantly impact the constitution of the field of Education as both a means and a source of the humanization process.

It is also an act of resistance. Capitalist forms and experiences have deprived a significant portion of society of access to full development, to the enhancement of their capacity to exist and an understanding that guides our analysis of the processes and conditions of depletion.

This deprivation of access constitutes, for us, the basis for a fragmented and superficial interpretation of reality, in which behavior becomes largely automated, merely reacting to stimuli. According to Spinoza (2007), individuals in such a state act under the bondage of affects, as they behave according to the influences they undergo, which prevents them from establishing connections between actions, facts, and objects, and leads them to internalize what affects them as if it were reality. For Saviani (2007, p. 9), this implies acting based on immediate impressions, which is “a chaotic whole, a confused view one has when analyzing this whole it would be the object as it presents itself at first glance.”

Thus, we argue that these conditions of depletion forged within our society are closely linked to the dismantling of education, to this relentless pursuit of having at the expense of being, which is rooted in a capitalist societal perspective that transforms rights into services. Education is thus reduced to a professional training service for society. In this context, it becomes urgent to reflect on whether these educational spaces, marked by precarious conditions and depletion, can truly foster an increase in the power to exist for those who see them as the sole path in their development process. For such a condition of depletion leads to the idea of “social barriers that hinder the development of the human personality. The resulting portrait is not one of full, all-sided human development, but rather a reduction to what is instinctive and even animalistic (Antunes, 2006, p. 127).

The intent here is not to assign blame to a single factor while disregarding the broader implications, as such an analysis of reality would fall into a syncretic conception. On the contrary, it is well understood that the challenges faced by education are not solely rooted in teacher education; rather, they reflect a structural problem involving multiple interrelated factors. However, when education is understood through the lens of Historical-Critical Pedagogy, the teacher occupies a central role in the process of enhancing students’ highest psychic capacities, as “pedagogical work is

configured as a mediation process that enables students to transition from an uncritical and unintentional insertion into society to a critical and intentional one” (Saviani, 2007, p. 9).

Nevertheless, as Severino (2006) points out, schools and universities through their pedagogical processes can transform instrumental reason into emancipatory reason, provided that they invest in a model of education that transcends capitalist conformism. He adds that, in order to achieve meaningful and effective education, pedagogical action must be grounded in the exercise of critical self-reflection, which translates into the formation of genuine consciousness.

We understand that the pedagogical act is not merely the appropriation of knowledge for immediate ends, but rather an arduous process an exercise that strengthens critical self-reflection (Severino, 2006). It is, therefore, a dialectical act, not in the sense of exclusion, but of incorporating what has been identified as progress and the overcoming of limits an act constituted by actions that always emerge from contradictions. It is not a superimposition of knowledge that neglects individuals’ lived experiences; on the contrary, it is a praxis born of critical reflection, one that expands the individual’s capacity to exist and act within society to think and engage actively since the point of departure and arrival of pedagogical work is always social practice (Saviani, 2007).

This constraint in the individual’s development process is strongly connected to the process of education itself. We thus hypothesize that spaces of Basic Education, both for teachers and students, are shaped by conditions of depletion. Although this theme lends itself to varied analyses through different theoretical frameworks, this study grounded in materialist assumptions across political, social, and psychological perspectives focuses on the debate surrounding these conditions of depletion, understood as processes comprising both objective and subjective elements that constrain, limit, and weaken the full development and expansion of our capacities and abilities to confront the many challenges embedded in both initial and continuing teacher education.

Our aim is to reach a scientific understanding of reality that transcends immediate impressions to understand teacher education and professional practice as they actually unfold. As Saviani (2008, p. 48) aptly stated in reference to the role of the school, “its role is not to display the visible face of the moon that is, to reiterate the everyday but to reveal the hidden face, that is, to uncover the essential aspects of social relations that lie concealed beneath the phenomena perceived through our immediate senses”.

In order to understand reality beyond immediate impressions, a quantitative study proved necessary, given that the current state of Brazilian education and more specifically, educational research has shown that quantitative studies in education remain scarce. However, to gain a more

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accurate understanding of the reality of Brazilian education, particularly of teaching practice, research that employs statistical analyses of the microdata from the School Census is essential. As Gatti (2004) emphasizes, there are adversities within the educational sphere that, in order to be better described and understood, must be qualified through quantitative data.

The contributions of quantitative research are undeniably valuable to the field of education, especially within the current Brazilian context. Still drawing from Gatti (2004, p. 16), educational analyses “based on quantified data, contextualized by theoretical perspectives and guided by careful methodological choices, offer concrete support for understanding educational phenomena”; such analyses allow us to go beyond immediate impressions, as they contribute to “the production and evaluation of educational policies, educational planning, administration/management, and can also inform pedagogical actions of either a general or specific nature.”

According to Falcão and Régnier (2000), in the human sciences, the process of materializing scientifically grounded knowledge often begins with an effort toward quantification. Quantification, as the authors explain, involves “mobilizing a system of measurements which, as a mathematical object, is characterized by a particular set of abstract properties,” insofar as this “system is chosen as a reference for the approach (measurement) of a given phenomenon” (Ibid., p. 2). In addition, and in line with Gatti (2004, p. 16), quantitative research helps demystify “representations, prejudices, and ‘gut feelings’ about educational phenomena, constructed solely from everyday common sense or marketing discourses.”

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the microdata from the School Census of the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP) for the state of Minas Gerais, covering the years 2010 to 2020. The objective is to examine the characterization of teachers in basic education, with the aim of problematizing how political, social, theoretical, and relational dimensions constitute facets of the process of professional depletion.

Theoretical Framework

The central issue at stake here concerns the instances of individual formation, which have ceased to function as public goods (Dias Sobrinho, 2013) and have instead assumed the role of service providers to society. Education no longer occurs in favor of fostering critical thinking enabling individuals to reflect and act upon life, to understand the forces that shape and condition their ways

of being in the world but rather focuses on conformity, on adapting to whatever best facilitates students' entry into the productive market.

In order to enter an increasingly competitive labor market, individuals now require a résumé that ensures at least the minimum level of training demanded by potential employers. Thus, continuous learning or, as widely promoted in the media, "retraining" becomes essential for the worker's permanence in the job. From this capitalist perspective, learning is viewed merely as preparation for the labor market. Institutionalized education, especially over the past 150 years, has come to serve, in its entirety,

[...] the purpose not only of providing the knowledge and personnel required by the expanding productive machinery of the capitalist system, but also of generating and transmitting a value system that legitimizes dominant interests, as if there were no possible alternative to the management of society whether in its 'internalized' form (that is, through properly 'educated' and socially accepted individuals), or through structurally imposed domination and relentlessly hierarchical subordination (Mészáros, 2008, p. 35).

One learns in order to achieve a specific goal with immediate utility, much like the industrial production process. However, in education, the "product" materializes in the attainment of a diploma, which is validated through test scores that confirm learning has taken place. The pursuit of knowledge is thus tied to a pragmatic order, one that upholds the discourse that good grades are necessary to obtain good internships and, consequently, a good job. In this way, the act of studying when conditioned by processes of depletion ends up being stripped of meaning by the individual themselves, as meanings are imposed externally and then internalized by the subject as if they were self-generated. This, according to Frigotto (1998, p. 14), leads to "the formation of an alienated consciousness in which the winners or the included attribute their status to their own effort and competence. The excluded, the defeated or the impoverished pay the price for their incompetence or poor choices."

Moreover, under such educational parameters, individuals are dispossessed of the process of constructing the meaning inherent to their labor power, and instead come to act in a mechanical and utilitarian manner, subordinated to norms that dehumanize them. As Codo (1999, p. 31) explains, "if a person is robbed of their own labor, they are robbed of themselves; they become lost when they should be identifying themselves, they fail to recognize themselves when they should be discovering themselves, they destroy themselves when they should be building themselves." This represents the annihilation of the subject the subjugation of the self to the alienating ways of contemporary life.

This leads us to question how, from the student's perspective, the processes of thinking and knowledge construction unfold within an educational model that sees only numbers and enrollment figures. If, during their education, students are merely learning to respond to directives imposed as

Teacher characterization: analysis of school census microdata rules to be followed mechanically without participation, autonomy, or critical thinking it prompts us to reflect on how their actions in the labor market are likely to become alienated practices carried out by subjects alienated not only from their own roles in the world, but also from an understanding of how the world acts upon their being. In this view, education contributes to distancing individuals from the process of producing meaning in relation to labor. As Duarte (2019, p. 168) states, social reality under such conditions presents itself to individuals “as incomprehensible and unpredictable forces that govern their lives.”

Therefore, we concur with Dias Sobrinho (2010, p. 1,231) that “an educational system that reinforces prejudice and expands social marginalization cannot be considered one of quality, from the perspective of public good and equity.” Moreover, the full development of individuals will never occur in societies where capital accumulation is the sole objective, for “a society that denies quality education to all is an unjust society and one that is democratically underdeveloped” (Ibid., p. 1,231). We also denounce the reservation of quality education for a small elite segment of society, which may serve “certain sectors of the market that demand advanced technologies and highly refined knowledge, but does not help to promote social justice” (Ibid., p. 1,231).

We thus agree, as Dias Sobrinho (2010, p. 1,231) emphasizes, that the foundation of a democratic society lies in the ethical premise of equity; therefore, “precarious education can never be deemed satisfactory.” Nonetheless, it is necessary to recognize that even an education that does not adhere to the principles of quality is still better than none at all, since, in some way, it contributes to the collective body of knowledge and professional competencies within a nation. Still according to the author, while it may carry some value and help improve “social indicators, low-quality education remains far from being capable of resolving problems of social justice” (Ibid., p. 1,231).

Thus, the position defended in this research is one that advocates for a university conceived as a social institution, oriented toward the public good, opposing the individualism that has become so corrosive in our time and the narrow pursuit of labor market demands. A public university must aim to awaken in students an awareness of the reality in which they live, promoting a praxis oriented toward the collective one based on a broad, non-fragmented perspective, in contrast to the logic imposed by capitalism. When the university is conceived as a public good, society becomes “its principle and its normative and value-based reference” (Chauí, 2003, p. 69). Only then will the university cease to be viewed and understood as a privilege for the few and become, in fact and in practice, a right.

We advocate for a quality basic education grounded in the principles of democracy—one that goes beyond equity to embody justice and promote social inclusion, ensuring that all students, without distinction or selectivity, have access to this education. Above all, it must foster meaningful learning, enabling students to reflect upon and understand the reality in which they are immersed and to see themselves as co-participants in the process of citizenship.

However, such education cannot occur nor will it ever occur without a teacher education process that enhances the humanization of teachers themselves, because “we need teachers who are committed to this role in basic education and who possess the formative conditions to carry it forward” (Gatti, 2017, p. 733).

Nevertheless, teacher qualification must not be understood solely as a means to acquire techniques to be applied in the classroom, with the university reduced to a legitimate source of such techniques and teachers treated as mere implementers. Pimenta (2005, p. 31) argues against this view, affirming instead that teacher education must aim to “educate them as critical intellectuals capable of affirming and practicing the discourse of freedom and democracy.”

Accordingly, we understand that a teacher’s practice must be grounded in a reflective process that takes place in action, on action, and about the reflection within the action (Pimenta, 2005). This corresponds to what Tardif (2008, p. 36) defines as teacher knowledge knowledge that is often disregarded in public policies for teacher education: “a plural knowledge, formed by a more or less coherent amalgam of knowledge derived from professional training, disciplinary knowledge, curricular knowledge, and experience.” Moreover, “it is knowledge that emerges from experience and is validated by it. It becomes part of individual and collective experience in the form of habitus and skills, of knowing how to do and how to be” (Tardif; Lessard; Lahaye, 1991, p. 220).

This knowledge is fundamentally constructed through relationships and through the teaching practice itself. Tardif (2008, p. 223) outlines the concept of the reflective practitioner, emphasizing that “teachers’ ‘competencies,’ insofar as they are indeed professional competencies, are directly linked to their capacity to rationalize their own practice, to critique it, revise it, and objectify it, seeking to ground it in reasons for action.” Thus, the educational process is not limited to intellectual or theoretical formation; rather, it involves an intertwining of different types of knowledge—knowledge drawn from reflective practice, from specialized theory, and from pedagogical engagement (Pimenta, 2005, p. 30).

All of this ultimately contributes to the production of elements that “constitute the teaching profession, endowing it with specific forms of knowledge that are not singular or fixed, in the sense

Teacher characterization: analysis of school census microdata that they do not form a closed body of knowledge” (Pimenta, 2005, p. 30), but are instead in a continuous process of production and transformation—precisely because society itself is constantly undergoing transformation, through the relationships and contradictions that arise within it. Based on this understanding, we conceive pedagogical practice as a complex act, since “the problems of professional teaching practice are not merely instrumental; rather, they involve problematic situations that require decision-making in a field marked by high complexity, uncertainty, uniqueness, and conflicting values” (Pimenta, 2005, p. 30).

In line with the teachings of Azzi (2005), by highlighting the importance of pedagogical knowledge in teaching practice and teacher education, we are neither devaluing nor minimizing the relevance of pedagogical knowledge produced by education researchers and scholars—nor are we establishing a division between those who think and those who merely implement teaching and education. On the contrary, our intention is to demonstrate that the teacher often regarded as a mere task executor is in fact someone who also reflects upon and thinks through the teaching process. By conceiving the teacher as a being who reflects on their own practice, we portray the teacher as a historical subject, that is, as someone whose thinking is conditioned by personal, professional, and contextual possibilities and limitations.

Furthermore, Azzi (2005, p. 4) emphasizes that, by grounding ourselves in teaching practice as a process that reveals “descriptive elements of the teacher's work, we seek, within the particularities of individual behavior, elements that allow for the reconstruction of the totality expressed therein.” It is through these particularities, as revealed in the school routine through teaching practice, that “we find evidence of the teacher’s pedagogical knowledge and practice, which may be expressed through praxis at various levels” (Ibid., p. 4). From this perspective, the classroom is understood as a space where “teaching practice becomes most evident in its daily routine. Yet the everyday, while revealing, is also capable of concealing much of reality” (Ibid., p. 49).

This conception of teacher education as a continuous process one that values in-service education as fundamental to more meaningful professional practice is not clearly reflected in current teacher education policies. This ambiguity gives way to a trend that reduces continuing education to mere training, shaped by a logic of technical rationality. We observe that such policy frameworks, grounded in a perspective that treats teachers as mere executors who only need to acquire a set of techniques to improve their performance lead many teachers into a continuous pursuit of training for the sake of obtaining certification. However, such certification does not guarantee quality teaching

practice. Quite the opposite it becomes tied to conceptions imposed by the labor market, intended to meet the demands of capital accumulation (Dias Sobrinho, 2013; Chauí, 2001; Frigotto, 1998).

When the importance of in-service teacher education for the full development of pedagogical practice is disregarded or even neglected it contributes to placing teachers at the mercy of conditions of depletion that hinder the attribution of meaning to their actions and to their ways of being and existing in the world, reducing them to responses aligned solely with the immediate demands of the so-called knowledge society. In such cases, the processes of assigning meaning and significance to pedagogical action are externally imposed, leading teachers to internalize these meanings as if they were self-generated, thereby fostering a practice grounded in reproduction.

Under such conditions, we may infer that the teacher education process to which educators are commonly subjected has, in most cases, fostered a formation that prevents the elevation from being-in-itself to being-for-itself (Duarte, 1993). Consequently, this hindrance tends to extend to students, with whom these teachers mediate access to knowledge. This occurs because the teleological positions (Lukács, 1979; Lessa & Tonet, 2011) are limited to individual will and to knowledge derived from a singular teleological position one which seeks “only the immediate satisfaction of necessity” (Costa, 2012, p. 123). An education oriented by capitalist interests and needs “necessarily produces what pertains only to being-in-itself,” whereas the elevation of the human species to being-for-itself “can only be achieved through conscious acts by human beings themselves” (Ibid., p. 117).

Thus, meaningful teacher education whether initial or continuing must regard the school as a formative space for teachers as well, where knowledge is produced and not merely reproduced. From this perspective, pedagogical practice becomes a space wherein teachers can assign meaning to their professional actions not based on external impositions, but through a dialectical and recursive process that recognizes the student as a concrete subject situated within a historical and social context, who learns through meaningful and purposeful mediation. Only then can education be conceived as a humanizing process, one whose point of departure and arrival is social practice (Saviani, 2007).

In order to ensure a quality basic education, it is essential to rethink the current teacher education process one that must go beyond the interests imposed by capital and beyond a technicist perspective that views the teacher as a “mere technician reproducing knowledge and/or facilitator of pre-designed programs” (Pimenta, 2005, p. 15). Despite movements that attempt to discredit the importance of the teacher in contemporary society, suggesting their replacement by digital technologies, our study seeks to emphasize the opposite: to highlight how necessary and indispensable the teacher truly is, “as a mediator in the processes that shape students’ citizenship—

Teacher characterization: analysis of school census microdata an effort that contributes to overcoming failure and educational inequality” (*Ibid.*, p. 15). The urgency of rethinking teacher education becomes evident.

To understand the implications of teacher education within the school context, it is necessary to return to the concept of educational labor, for, as Saviani (1991, p. 14) affirms, it is “the act of intentionally and directly producing, in each individual, the humanity that is historically and collectively produced by the human species.” Thus, education is understood as a process that enhances humanization in individuals, “which takes place within human society with the explicit purpose of enabling individuals to participate in the civilizing process and take responsibility for its continuation” (Pimenta, 2005, p. 23).

For Martins (2016, p. 51), to conceive education from this perspective is to affirm that the school’s foundational function is the “socialization of historically produced knowledge aimed at the full humanization of individuals.” In other words, the role of education is inseparable from its humanizing function. However, it is important to recognize that “to educate involves intention—it implies a political-pedagogical stance, and it requires the educator to constantly make decisions in favor of some possibilities and against others” (*Ibid.*, p. 51).

Accordingly, drawing on Vygotskian concepts, Martins (2016) emphasizes that higher psychological functions express the “substrate of human consciousness” and regulate human behavior, thereby distinguishing humans from animals. These functions originate in social life, and their development only occurs through mediation rooted in social relations. On this basis, the appropriation of culture is advocated as a condition for the development of human thought and the consequent understanding of social and natural reality (*Ibid.*, p. 51).

Based on the above, we may infer that education, from the aforementioned perspective, aims to prepare children and young people to rise to the level of contemporary civilization with all its wealth and problems so that they may act within it. This requires scientific, technical, and social preparation. From this standpoint, the goals of contemporary school education intertwined with technology, information, and globalization should enable students to engage with scientific and technological knowledge, developing the skills to operate, revise, and reconstruct such knowledge with wisdom. This, in turn, requires analyzing, confronting, and contextualizing it (Pimenta, 2005, p. 23).

It is through the complexity attributed to the act of educating that we understand the importance of higher education for teachers. For how can we realize an education conceived as a humanizing process if teachers are perceived and treated merely as instructional technicians? When we understand the teacher as a mediator of systematized knowledge toward learning that promotes a transformation

in individuals' capacity to be, making them better than they were it becomes essential to provide teacher education that communicates to current and future educators both the significance and the implications of their role in society.

These implications, which are inherent to pedagogical practice, must always be contextualized and understood by the school, since, as Gatti (2017, pp. 732–733) asserts, “knowledge is one of the most powerful determinants of social inequality.” It is also a factor of differentiation among individuals and their social groups, and the ability to interpret and to formulate one's own value judgments becomes the foundation for “constructing personal autonomy and developing counterpoints that allow the overcoming of challenging living conditions whether in daily life, scientific activity, the environment, or societal structures.”

Thus, for Gatti (2017, p. 733), knowledge is inseparable from a “humanitarian consciousness committed to preserving life in dignified conditions,” and education must be grounded in these principles. The work carried out in schools gains its meaning through this framework. It is not only urgent but necessary that our schools especially public basic education schools—have teachers, administrators, coordinators, and educational staff who are fully aware of the importance of recognizing “the school's social function and, within it, the teacher's role, as well as assuming this responsibility through their own formative processes” (*Ibid.*, p. 733).

Therefore, in initial teacher education programs, such as licentiate degrees, the expectation is that prospective teachers will be prepared for the full exercise of their professional role—or at least that such programs will contribute meaningfully to this formation. In other words, “that they support the development of teaching practice, since teaching is not a bureaucratic activity that can be performed with merely technical or mechanical knowledge and skills” (Pimenta, 2005, p. 18). Based on the premise that teaching contributes to the humanization of students historically and socially situated within the school environment, “licentiate programs are expected to cultivate in future teachers the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that will enable them to continuously construct their own teaching knowledge and practice, grounded in the needs and challenges that teaching, as a social practice, presents in their everyday work” (*Ibid.*, p. 18).

Experiencing a high-quality initial teacher education means that future teachers should also be able, as Pimenta (2005, p. 18) affirms, to mobilize “knowledge from the theory of education and didactics necessary to understand teaching as a social reality.” At the same time, such education must equip students with the skills to incorporate elements of inquiry and research into their own practice,

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“so that, through it, they may construct and transform their teaching knowledge and practices in a continuous process of building their professional identities as teachers”.

Research Design

This study focuses on the analysis of social indicators for the state of Minas Gerais, derived from the microdata provided by the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (INEP), covering the years 2010 to 2020. The data refer specifically to the following stages of education: Early Childhood Education – Daycare, Early Childhood Education – Preschool, and the initial years of Elementary Education. To ensure the rigor of the study, the use of descriptive statistics was essential, as well as the application of the software tool Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

A realização do Censo Escolar tem periodização anual, mais precisamente definida por uma portaria que determina um dia específico como sendo o “Dia Nacional do Censo Escolar”, de acordo com a Portaria do Ministério da Educação (MEC) n. 264/2007. Ainda munidos pelo documento INEP-2020, *PRESS KIT*, coloca que, nos últimos anos, o início da coleta ocorre na última quarta-feira do mês de maio, visto a necessidade de demarcar uma data no calendário escolar para a realização da coleta dos dados, devido à grandeza e à diversidade do Brasil (BRASIL, 2020).

As for data collection, it is declaratory in nature and is carried out in two phases. The first involves the “completion of initial enrollment, during which information is collected regarding educational institutions, administrators, classes, students, and classroom professionals.” The second phase pertains to the “submission of information concerning the student’s academic status, including data on student enrollment flow and academic performance at the end of the school year.” It can thus be stated that “the School Census is governed by regulatory instruments that establish its mandatory nature, timelines, responsible parties and their duties, as well as the procedures for conducting the entire data collection process (Brasil, 2020, p. 2).

It is important to highlight a relevant point: this study uses the School Census database as its primary source of analysis. Once collected, the data are characterized as microdata, which, in order to be analyzed and cross-referenced, require processing through software capable of decoding them, since they

[...] represent the most disaggregated level of School Census data, allowing for detailed analyses and comparisons based on the user’s interest. Access to microdata requires the use of statistical software. The information can be downloaded in ASCII

format, which includes input structures compatible with SAS and SPSS software. (Brasil, 2020, p. 6).

It can thus be inferred that the School Census is a highly significant tool, as it enables educational researchers “to understand the educational situation of the country, of the federal units, of the municipalities and the Federal District, as well as of individual schools, and thereby monitor the effectiveness of public policies” (Brasil, 2020, p. 2). This understanding of the educational reality

[...] occurs through a broad set of indicators that make it possible to monitor the development of Brazilian education, such as the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB), school performance and flow rates, age-grade distortion, among others. All these indicators are calculated based on data from the School Census. Furthermore, the enrollment data and other information collected serve as the basis for the allocation of federal government funding and for the planning and dissemination of data from assessments conducted by Ine (Brasil, 2020, p. 2).

Once the nature of microdata is understood, it becomes clear why this source must be used as the object of study in the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the challenges facing Brazil’s educational system. This instrument grants access to a broad “overview of Brazilian education and, as an important tool for transparency, is undoubtedly a rich repository of information on basic education in our country.” Moreover, it also serves as “a reliable and effective source of data, accessible to researchers, students, administrators, and society at large” (Brasil, 2016, p. 6).

From this perspective, we understand, as Gatti (2012) does, that through this research we seek to contribute to the scientific construction of knowledge, recognizing that, in attempting to develop a systematized body of “knowledge that allows us to understand in depth that which, at first glance, the world of things and people reveals to us in a nebulous or chaotic form,” we advance the role of science in clarifying complex realities. (*Ibid.*, p. 10).

We are therefore committed to following certain paths “that appear to us, based on specific criteria, to be the most reliable for constructing a closer understanding of human beings and human relationships” (Gatti, 2012, p. 10), as well as their historicity. To this end, it is important to be aware that:

Thus, the research is marked by certain particular characteristics that allow us a degree of confidence regarding the type of knowledge produced. It is important to note that we speak of a degree of confidence, not of absolute certainty. This is because, in the production of knowledge, there is always a margin of uncertainty—even if, in some cases, this margin is extremely small. For the researcher, there are no dogmas, no revealed or absolute truths—in other words, there is no such thing as absolute or definitive knowledge. Knowledge is always relatively synthesized under specific conditions or circumstances, depending on the theories, methods, and

Teacher characterization: analysis of school census microdata themes that the researcher chooses to work with. Yet such syntheses must be consistent and plausible (Gatti, 2012, p. 10).

From this perspective, the researcher seeks to “describe, understand, or explain something,” using this approach as a foundation “ultimately, in any field of knowledge, to solve problems” (Gatti, 2012, p. 11). Based on this understanding, and with the aim of achieving the outlined objectives, this study is anchored in the quantitative method, which is based on descriptive statistics. According to Zanella (2013), descriptive statistics involve the objective measurement and quantification of results, with the goal of generalizing data about a population by studying only a small portion of it.

Quantitative research employs representative samples of a segment of society to measure attributes. What often guides researchers in choosing this method is the aim “to determine how many people in a given population share a particular characteristic or set of characteristics.” Moreover, “quantitative research is suitable for measuring not only opinions, attitudes, and preferences, but also behaviors” (Zanella, 2013, p. 96).

Gatti (2004, p. 13) supports this view, noting that in the field of education, “there are educational problems that, in order to be contextualized and understood, need to be qualified through quantitative data,” since, for such purposes, numbers become essential instruments—“along with their interrelations.”

Accordingly, given the scope of the data collected in this study, the present analysis focuses on identifying key aspects related to indicators of personal characteristics, initial teacher education, and continuing education, which together provide the basis for an analysis of the unveiling of conditions of professional depletion.

Analyses and Discussions

For this study, the reading of the School Census microdata was structured into three substantiated stages, which comprise the selected variables related to the state of Minas Gerais, focusing on the stages of education up to the early years of elementary school, and on the professionals working in the public school system. The selection of indicators allowed us to construct the guiding question: “Who are the teachers of Minas Gerais from initial education to professional practice?” as outlined in the summary table below.

Box 1 - Teaching Profile in the Public Education System from Early Childhood Education – Daycare to Elementary School I, according to School Census Microdata (2010–2020) – MEC/Inep, State of Minas Gerais.

Personal Characterization Indicators
In 2010, 80% of teachers were 31 years old or older
In 2020, 89.45% of teachers were 31 years old or older
In 2010, 13.4% of teachers were male
In 2020, 15.7% of teachers were male
In 2010, 8.5% of teachers self-identified as Black (<i>pretos</i>)
In 2020, 7.4% of teachers self-identified as Black (<i>pretos</i>)
Teacher Education Profile Indicators
In 2010, 79.3% of teachers held a higher education degree
In 2020, 87.4% of teachers held a higher education degree
In 2010, 34.5% of teachers had completed a specialization course
In 2020, 48.9% of teachers had completed a specialization course
In 2010, 35.19% of teachers graduated from public universities
In 2020, 29.4% of teachers graduated from public universities
In 2010, 64.8% of teachers graduated from private universities
In 2020, 70.5% of teachers graduated from private universities
Indicators of Teaching Practice Characteristics
<input type="checkbox"/> In 2010, 95.3% of teachers were engaged in classroom teaching
<input type="checkbox"/> In 2020, 88.4% of teachers were engaged in classroom teaching
<input type="checkbox"/> In 2010, 51.6% of teachers worked in municipal institutions
<input type="checkbox"/> In 2020, 64.5% of teachers worked in municipal institutions
<input type="checkbox"/> In 2010, 92.4% of teachers worked in urban areas
<input type="checkbox"/> In 2020, 94% of teachers worked in urban areas
<input type="checkbox"/> In 2010, 31% were contract-based professionals
<input type="checkbox"/> In 2020, 34.8% were contract-based professionals

Fonte: Adapted from School Census Microdata (2010–2020) – MEC/Inep.

When analyzing the School Census data regarding the personal characteristics of teachers working in the public education system from 2010 to 2020 in the state of Minas Gerais, a persistent trend becomes evident: a decrease in the number of teachers under the age of 31 and a progressive

Teacher characterization: analysis of school census microdata increase in those over that age. There is also a symbolic rise in the percentage of male teachers and a decline in the percentage of teachers who self-identified as Black (pretos).

This aging of the active teaching workforce reveals two main issues: first, the late entry of these professionals into the labor market, which reflects a delayed academic trajectory due to life circumstances that prevented access to higher education immediately after completing secondary school; and second, a trend toward training individuals already working in education, but lacking specific qualifications.

In order to better understand and expose these circumstances, we offer a few reflections on this aging trend, which is closely related to the educational pathways of teachers in licentiate programs. As discussed by Gatti et al. (2019) in the book *Professores do Brasil: novos cenários de formação* (Teachers of Brazil: New Training Scenarios), in-service elementary teachers who were still working with only a secondary-level qualification were compelled to enroll in pedagogy programs due to legal requirements. This process was especially stimulated by the reduced tuition costs of private institutions, resulting from the expansion of distance education programs (EAD) and the increase in student loan opportunities.

This insight from Gatti et al. (2019) is supported by data from the 2018 Higher Education Census, which shows that pedagogy programs are predominantly offered by private institutions in distance learning modalities. According to the report, when considering in-person programs, pedagogy in the federal network accounted for 3.6% of enrollments, compared to 3.9% in the private network. However, for distance learning programs, pedagogy represented 12.9% of enrollments in the federal network and 23.4% in the private sector (Brazil, 2019, p. 36).

According to Gatti et al. (2019), the expansion of higher education opportunities especially in the private sector and in distance learning led professionals from other fields to pursue a second degree as a strategy to increase their chances in the job market, particularly in Basic Education. Additionally, many professionals with only a secondary education decided to pursue a degree in teaching due to this greater accessibility, choosing licentiate programs as a way to secure employment in less competitive sectors and potentially benefit from higher salaries. In many careers, any higher education certificate regardless of specialization is sufficient for career advancement.

Regarding the issue of gender in teacher education programs, the data reveal that this dynamic has been shifting over the years and must be carefully and thoroughly analyzed in order to determine whether such changes represent progress or setbacks. As our analyses show, and as noted by Dias Sobrinho (2010), pedagogy and some licentiate programs are often pursued by students (both male

and female) from more socially disadvantaged backgrounds who were unable to meet the higher cut-off scores required for more prestigious courses, and thus had limited options.

It is also important to recall that the entry of (white) women into the labor market occurred, among other ways, through teaching. Yet this professional pathway became closely associated with the traditional role of women as caretakers and homemakers. As Louro (2012, p. 450) explains, “if the woman’s primordial destiny was motherhood, it sufficed to think of teaching as, in a certain sense, an ‘extension of motherhood,’ each student seen as a spiritual son or daughter.” This perception gave rise to the notion of teaching as an act of “love” or a “calling,” which continues to appear in the justifications many give for choosing the profession. Ultimately, this contributes to the devaluation of teaching, as it becomes linked to a naturalized extension of domestic roles, particularly the maternal figure..

According to Viana (2002, p. 93), these discourses and narratives are saturated with stereotypes about both men and women, preventing us from advancing toward a more just and democratic education. As the author notes, “several stereotypes about men and women are thus created: aggressive, militaristic, rational for them; docile, relational, emotional for them.” However, these stereotypes, when socially reinforced, come to define gendered spaces of action, in which “food, motherhood, preservation, education, and care for others become more closely associated with female bodies and minds, thereby occupying an inferior status in society compared to functions considered masculine” (Ibid., p. 93).

As highlighted in the analyses, the fact that teacher education programs are composed predominantly of women reinforces the socially constructed stereotypes and prejudices associated with women’s labor such as the notion of being caregivers, members of the “weaker sex,” or that their work is a mere hobby. This represents a diminished portrayal of professional engagement, rooted in the social, historical, and economic conditions underlying the choice of such programs. This scenario reveals that many of these courses are still seen as a means of guaranteeing women access to higher education often in conditions of significant precarity.

When analyzing the data on racial self-identification, it is essential to consider the educational background of individuals. According to the Brazilian Basic Education Yearbook 2019, the expansion of higher education has, in fact, reinforced inequality, since “while three out of ten white individuals reach university, only 1.5 out of ten Black Brazilians do” (Cruz & Monteiro, 2019, p. 98).

In contrast to this reality, the 2019 National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) shows that, based on self-declared identity, 42.7% of Brazilians identified as white, 46.8% as pardo (mixed race),

Teacher characterization: analysis of school census microdata 9.4% as Black, and only 1.1% as either Asian or Indigenous (IBGE, 2020). This clearly demonstrates that Brazil is not a majority-white country, contrary to the claims of some groups. Rather, the Brazilian population is largely composed of those who identify as pardo, Black, Asian, or Indigenous. Yet it is precisely these groups who continue to make up the ranks of the excluded and marginalized in society, which reflects and intensifies class tensions.

Such tensions are further confirmed when we analyze higher education enrollment data. According to the Brazilian Basic Education Yearbook 2019, only 15.1% of students enrolled in higher education identify as Black, while white students account for 30.7% of total enrollments. This underscores the fact that, even with the policies aimed at addressing these disparities, access to a well-structured university education remains a privilege for the few (Cruz & Monteiro, 2019). As Chauí (2001) reminds us, the dominant social discourse seeks to legitimize the notion that education is equally accessible to all. Yet, as the data presented in the Yearbook and in this study clearly indicate, we are still far from achieving a more just and democratic education for all.

Situations such as these reveal the strong link between historical conditions of access and structural inequalities, which are tied to socially and economically undervalued labor, shaped by the interests of capital and the market. This dynamic fosters a process of professional engagement that is devoid of meaning. According to our analyses concerning the expansion of higher education as outlined in the Brazilian Basic Education Yearbook 2019 these conditions reinforce inequality (Cruz & Monteiro, 2019). As Dias Sobrinho (2010, p. 1,240) states, “The expansion of the educational system is important, but it is the already advantaged groups that are best positioned to benefit from the new opportunities created by changes in higher education and society.”

The findings from the personal characterization data lead us to reflect on how historical conditions of access, permanence, and development within the field of teacher education and professional practice shaped by the broader challenges posed by the inequalities that plague our country take form. These inequalities, examined through various lenses such as gender, age, race, and color, impact and define the realization of a professional field (whether in initial teacher training, continuing education, or teaching practice) that seldom supports the full development and expansion of professionals. Instead, such conditions may shape and reinforce processes of meaning depletion regarding one’s career choice, trajectory, and, above all, the intentional definition of one’s professional life.

Understanding teacher identity as shaped by historical, social, and economic conditions allows us to recognize the problem of teaching being reduced to mere labor market insertion a subsistence

strategy. Conceiving of teaching through a market-oriented lens creates space for the emergence of uberization in education, often framed as the expansion of opportunities, but which, in this study, is viewed as the precarization of teaching labor. This contributes to the dismantling of education, as work becomes reduced to employment the insertion of the worker into the market regardless of the conditions offered with the ultimate goal being to “increase the extraction of surplus value through human labor power” (Fontes, 2017).

Labor relegated to such conditions of employment “consists of a false notion of autonomy and independence and involves a significant intensification and workload, aimed at securing mere subsistence-level income” (Venco, 2019, p. 7). In such circumstances, work produces a “disempowerment of the worker” (Antunes, 2006). Therefore, when labor power is commodified, the worker becomes hostage to money and wages as the sole guarantee of survival. The teacher as a worker in and of education becomes subject to the demands of capitalist ideals and the interests of the corporate market. As a result, the school loses its social function as a space for human development.

A model of teacher education and practice that serves the interests of capital and is aimed at meeting market demands entails an operational approach that does not allow for meaningful engagement, but rather reduces teaching to the mere execution of tasks (Codo, 1999). This opens the door for pedagogy and licentiate programs to be perceived as stepping-stones to the labor market—under the illusion of social ascension. Such scenarios give rise to alienation, which manifests as “man’s essential forces, objectified in the form of tangible, external, and useful objects—as alienation” (Marx, 1978, p. 13).

Regarding initial teacher education, the data on teachers in Minas Gerais who hold higher education degrees are encouraging, as they represent the majority and show a growing trend. These changes in teacher education are partly related to the advancement of public policies aimed at teacher training, particularly following the enactment of the 1996 National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDBEN-1996). Although the law continued to allow for teaching at the early stages of education with only a secondary-level teacher training qualification (magistério), the actual offering of these programs was phased out in most states, giving way to the expansion of Normal Superior and pedagogy degree programs (Pinto, 2002).

Higher education brings with it the understanding that access to information is not enough; it is not sufficient to know how and what to teach prospective teachers must grasp the broader dimensions of knowledge production. “That is, to know is to be conscious of the power of knowledge in producing

Teacher characterization: analysis of school census microdata the material, social, and existential life of humanity” (Pimenta, 2005, p. 22). A teacher education limited to secondary-level qualifications does not encompass this broader dimension of teaching, which transcends the mere execution of activities.

In this context, we observe that teacher education has been the focus of public policies that promote and reinforce the importance of higher education as the appropriate level for training future teachers. Examples include the 1988 Constitution, the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDBEN) of 1961 and 1996, the 1998 National Curriculum Guidelines for Teacher Education, the National Curriculum Guidelines for Basic Education Teacher Training (Opinion No. 09/2001), and the CNE/CP Resolutions Nos. 1/2002, 2/2015, and 2/2019, in addition to the expectation that such policies align with the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC).

This trend is confirmed by the data presented in this study, which show an increase in the percentage of teachers with higher education degrees. However, the public policies developed for teacher education including the New National Policy for Teacher Training (Brazil, 2017) tend to focus primarily on expanding access to training, whether initial or continuing, without sufficiently addressing the need for guaranteed quality and meaningful education. Little to no emphasis is placed on teacher knowledge as a domain of professional development and self-formation—whether within or beyond school settings, or through peer learning among teachers. The focus remains on cognitive training, as if this were the only challenge faced in the field of teaching.

This incentive has, in turn, contributed to the expansion of distance education, as indicated in the Brazilian Basic Education Yearbook 2020, which covers the same period analyzed in this study. The report shows that “teacher training through distance learning programs has been increasing.” Furthermore, this growth has been particularly evident in the private sector, where the pedagogy degree is the most sought-after program in the distance education modality for teacher training (Cruz; Monteiro, 2020).

Due to this rapid and disorganized expansion of distance education programs, the National Education Council established a commission to “discuss and propose national regulations for the provision of higher education programs and courses via distance learning” (Santos, 2019, p. 57). The result of this commission was a resolution outlining measures and procedures related to the processes inherent to distance education.

Such measures, as proposed in the resolution, are based on the aim of addressing the deficit in access to higher education caused by Brazil’s vast territorial dimensions, which make it unfeasible for many to attend in-person classes. Distance education is also presented as an option for individuals

who are unable to access higher education due to work obligations, as it allows them to organize their study schedules around their own time. Thus, distance learning programs are presented as a way to address these gaps,

[...] The use of the distance education modality would ensure the expansion of educational opportunities and the democratization of access to education, with broader reach, greater flexibility for teachers and students, and the modernization of educational processes through the use of information and communication technologies” (Santos, 2019, p. 54).

However, Gatti et al. (2019), through their studies on teacher education, help to clarify the actual implications of public policy incentives for teacher training, particularly as they relate to the growing prevalence of distance learning programs often offered by the Universidades Abertas do Brasil (UAB) and by private colleges and universities. According to the authors, these studies demonstrate that “the quality of these programs has revealed problems not only regarding the use of technologies and implementation models, but also concerning content, tutoring, and assessment practices” (Ibid., p. 94).

While enrollment in private distance education programs continues to rise, so does the number of unfilled vacancies due to high dropout rates. As Chaves, Santos, and Kato (2019, p. 67) argue, “the expansion of higher education through the private-mercantile sector must be analyzed in the broader global context of capital valorization (...) whose explicit goal is profit.” For Chauí (2001; 2003) and Dias Sobrinho (2010), this signals a transformation of the university’s function in society from a space of public commitment to a provider of services.

Nonetheless, we reaffirm the importance of public policies in advancing education. However, we also recognize that gaps remain both in the political discourse that supports such policies and in their practical implementation. Improving education requires addressing multiple dimensions, not only teacher education. Moreover, it is not enough to discuss teacher training without also addressing the concrete implementation of Goals 17 and 18 of the National Education Plan (PNE) and the real working conditions of teachers, which are often neglected in public debate or, at best, marginally acknowledged.

When teacher education policy is aligned only with limited political demands, we risk reinforcing a model of training rooted in technicism and utilitarianism one that neglects a comprehensive, omnilateral approach in favor of a unilateral formation, failing to articulate clearly and effectively the practical pathways toward an education that takes into account individual particularities and social diversity.

Teacher education is of central importance for realizing a democratic education an education that serves the public good since it is a “relevant factor in improving the quality of public schools, though not to be considered in isolation, but rather within broader political decisions aimed at improving teachers’ working conditions” (Azzi, 2005, p. 57).

However, based on the data collected in this study and the analyses of current teacher education policies, what emerges is precisely the opposite: teacher education is often conceived merely as a solution to the problem of access to higher education.

Regarding teaching practice, it is worth noting that more than half of the professionals working from Early Childhood Education – Daycare to the early years of Elementary School I hold permanent positions. Nonetheless, the percentage of contract-based teachers has steadily increased in recent years. Analyzing these figures, we can see that we remain far from achieving the target established in Goal 18 of the PNE, which addresses the career plans of education professionals. This goal emphasizes, as a core strategy, the need to “structure public basic education systems so that, by the beginning of the third year of the PNE’s implementation, at least 90% of teaching professionals (...) hold permanent, tenured positions (Brasil, 2014, p. 57).

In addition to being far from meeting this goal, as previously discussed, the characterizations presented in this study reveal that most professionals are older, hold higher education degrees in the field, yet have often undergone a precarious training process since their enrollment in such programs was not always a matter of choice, but rather a way to adapt and gain access to the labor market. Furthermore, we observe an increase in the number of contract-based professionals in education, indicating a clear gap between what is proposed in public education policies and what is actually observed in practice. This discrepancy underscores the fact that we have yet to move beyond discourse, targets, and strategies toward genuinely improving the quality of Brazilian education.

This scenario represents one of the most urgent and severe aspects of the conditions of depletion, as teachers are increasingly perceived as mere professional workers easily discarded or replaced by others, often referred to as substitute teachers. The core issue with this way of managing those responsible for educating future generations lies in the time constraints placed on their labor. Teachers are required to perform numerous tasks and meet countless targets just to retain their positions, leaving them with no time to study, read, reflect, or conduct research.

For a truly democratic education to take place, teachers must first be valued not merely through rhetoric in public policy, but through concrete actions: meaningful training, fair wages, and attractive career advancement plans. The absence of such conditions perpetuates the ongoing preference for

hiring temporary or outsourced professionals instead of permanent staff, thereby deepening the precarization of education. As Libâneo (2012, p. 23) points out, “schooling rates may increase, but social inequalities in access to knowledge are exacerbated,” as “public schools are assigned the task of including populations excluded or marginalized by neoliberal logic, without being provided with sufficient investment, qualified teachers, or pedagogical innovations by governments.

When pedagogical work begins to conform to market logic, it becomes a tedious task—no different from industrial-era production labor. As a result, it is not uncommon to hear pedagogues, educators, and teachers complain that teaching is “a drag” or that they “can’t stand grading papers anymore” (*sic*) (Bezerra; Silva, 2006, p. 6).

Considerações Finais

Through this research, we sought to analyze the School Census microdata for the state of Minas Gerais from 2010 to 2020, focusing on the characterization of teachers in Basic Education, with the aim of problematizing how political, social, theoretical, and relational dimensions constitute key facets in the process of professional depletion. This enabled us to understand the reality of teaching and its various dimensions personal, initial training, and professional practice beyond immediate impressions.

Based on the analyses developed, we understand that defending a school from a democratic perspective necessarily involves defending a professional structure within the school that is also democratic. Regarding teacher education, we reaffirm the importance of public policies for teacher training. However, we recognize that gaps persist both in the political discourse supporting these policies and in their practical implementation since improving education involves multiple dimensions, not just training. Furthermore, it is insufficient to discuss teacher education without also addressing concrete strategies for implementing Goals 17 and 18 of the National Education Plan (PNE) and the actual working conditions of teachers, which are often neglected or granted only marginal attention. As for teaching practice, we note that we are still far from achieving the target established in PNE Goal 18, which governs career plans for education professionals.

To advance toward an education that is truly democratic, high-quality, and public, it is essential among other efforts to establish teacher education programs (initial, continuing, and in-service) that promote critical consciousness. Such efforts must ensure that the struggles waged in defense of education are not reduced to meeting the immediate needs and interests of the capitalist system, but instead emerge from an organized collective that, in defending public education, highlights its contribution to a more socially conscious and collectively engaged society.

There is an urgent need to denounce the barbarization and precarization of education trends in which successive governments have attempted to turn education into a commodity. As Chauí (2001, p. 52) asserts, the goal “is not to produce and transmit culture (whether dominant or not that is of little importance), but to train individuals so that they may become productive for whoever hires them.”

All of this leads us to reaffirm the importance of teacher education and professional practice as means to confront the conditions of depletion that hinder the full development of both teachers and students and, above all, allow education to be stripped of its social function. When teacher education and practice are immersed in such conditions, they prevent teachers from achieving a meaningful and purposeful professional experience.

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Recebido em: 23/10/2023
Aprovado em: 03/10/2024