

The choice of the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Minas Gerais/Ribeirão das Neves Campus and the school-related work of families¹

A escolha do Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia de Minas Gerais/ Campus Ribeirão das Neves e o trabalho escolar das famílias

Elegir el Instituto Federal de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología de Minas Gerais/ Campus de Ribeirão das Neves y el trabajo escolar de las familias

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ABSTRACT

This article results from research that aimed to understand the schoolwork of families in the process of choosing the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Minas Gerais (IFMG), Ribeirão das Neves campus. To do so, I employed a profile analysis of the students and the families that had children enrolled in the courses of this institution. I investigated how the families' schoolwork took place in the process of defining the teaching institution of their children and, finally, I investigated if different families presented different strategies that defined their choice for the teaching institution in question. As a result, the study pointed out the different families' *habitus* action while choosing the teaching institution; the families' schoolwork, highlighted by their pedagogical, psychological, social, and economic efforts; the mothers' agency in conducting their families' school formation.

Keywords: Family-School Relationship. Teaching Institution Choice. Schoolwork. *Habitus*. Secondary Technical Professional Education.

RESUMO

O presente artigo resulta de pesquisa que teve como objetivo compreender o trabalho escolar das famílias no processo de escolha do Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia de Minas Gerais (IFMG) *Campus* Ribeirão das Neves. Para tanto, analisou-se o perfil dos alunos e das famílias que possuem filhos matriculados nos cursos dessa instituição. Investigou-se como se deu o trabalho escolar das famílias para a definição do estabelecimento de ensino dos filhos e, por fim, verificou-se se diferentes famílias apresentam estratégias diferenciadas e definidoras para a escolha do estabelecimento escolar em questão. O estudo apontou como resultados a ação do *habitus* das

¹ This article is the final research result of the masters' dissertation of same title, written and defended by the author at the Post-Graduate Program in Education of the Federal University of São João-del-Rei.

diferentes famílias na escolha do estabelecimento escolar; o trabalho escolar das famílias, ressaltado nos esforços pedagógicos, psicológicos, sociais e econômicos empreendidos; a atuação das mães na condução da formação escolar das famílias.

Palavras-chave: Família-Escola. Escolha do Estabelecimento Escolar. Trabalho Escolar. Habitus. Educação Profissional e Tecnológica.

RESUMEN

Este artículo resulta de una investigación que tuvo como objetivo comprender el trabajo escolar de las familias en el proceso de elección del IFMG Campus Ribeirão das Neves. Por ello, se analizó el perfil de los estudiantes y familias con hijos matriculados en los cursos de esta institución. Se investigó cómo sucedió el trabajo escolar de las familias para definir el establecimiento educativo de sus hijos y, finalmente, se verificó si diferentes familias presentan estrategias distintas y definitorias para la elección del colegio en cuestión. El estudio señaló como resultados la acción del *habitus* de diferentes familias en la elección del establecimiento escolar; el trabajo escolar de las familias, evidenciado en los esfuerzos pedagógicos, psicológicos, sociales y económicos emprendidos; el papel de las madres en la conducción de la educación de las familias.

Palabras clave: Família-Escola. Elección del Establecimiento Escolar. Trabajo Escolar. *Habitus*. Educación Profesional Técnica Secundaria.

INTRODUCTION

This article intends to investigate the procedures and strategies made by families, or the school-related work of families, in choosing the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Minas Gerais (Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia de Minas Gerais — IFMG), campus Ribeirão das Neves (henceforth IFMG-Ribeirão das Neves, or just IFMG), for the secondary technical education of their children. The article analyzes the strategies of a group of families that were the object of this study.

We opted to study why they chose the IFMG based on studies by Maria Alice Nogueira (1998a), mainly the article “The choice of education establishment by families: the discreet action of cultural wealth” (*A escolha do estabelecimento de ensino pelas famílias: a ação discreta da riqueza cultural*). In this text, Nogueira analyzed the importance of starting a discussion on these themes in Brazil, following French discussions. Nogueira (1998a) showed that there are many points in common with research made in both countries, especially because, in both countries, the school networks have continuously lost the homogenous character of their organization, delegating to each family their particular decision on which teaching establishment would be better suited for their children.

This article has also been guided by the research field of “family-school relationship”, in order to analyze the choice of educational establishment. We recurred further to Portes (1993; 2001), Nogueira (1998b), Pierre Bourdieu (2015), and other scholars of the sociology of education, who were important in building our argument.

Nogueira (1998b) presented the changing trends in sociological thought concerning the interactions between families and educational institutions. From the 1960s on, Bourdieu’s sociological studies were important to change sociological thought, upon presenting other parameters to understand issues related to educational inequalities. What once had been

explained by the presence or absence of gifts and aptitudes, Bourdieu analyzed biases coming from social origins. According to Nogueira and Nogueira (2017, p. 25), Bourdieu argued that each individual, due to their position in the social structures, has a series of experiences that internally structures their subjectivity, creating a type of “matrix of perceptions and appreciations” that will guide their actions in all subsequent situations.

Immersed in the themes dear to this new view on the sociology of education, our study brings the theme of the “choice of educational institution” as an example of the work of families for a better conduction of their children’s learning process. Different studies have found different reasons why families choose particular educational establishments, by showing that some parents hierarchize their options using organizational and educational reference points, besides the curricula and teaching practices, while others place more importance on aspects like the school’s localization and the socioeconomic, residential or racial status of the student body in order to reach a decision (Costa and Koslinski, 2011, p. 8-9).

As explained by Portes (2001, p. 252), investigating the process of making decisions regarding educational establishments means thinking about the school-related work of the families that can be seen in all the actions — occasional or poorly organized — that are undertaken to secure the admission and permanence of their children in the school system, to influence their school trajectory so they can reach increasingly higher education levels.

The choice of school has been studied by a variety of scholars. We drew on work carried out in the fields of humanities, education and sociology of education, as well as on authors that approach the central aspects of the researched theme — the strategies of families from less well-off groups to choose educational establishments (Portes, 1993; 2001; Costa, 2008; Romanelli, 2013).²

We establish the relevance of this theme in the initial theoretical references for this study, which point to the lack of specific works in the last two decades of academic literature. This has been confirmed by Romanelli (2013, p. 47), who, in his “Critical survey on the relationships between family and school” (*Levantamento crítico sobre as relações família e escola*), analyzed Brazilian journals between 1997 and 2011 and observed that, among the themes concerned with the family-school relationship, the choice of educational establishment has produced some works that are relevant to understanding both institutions. In the same study, Romanelli (2013, p. 56) registered a lack of studies on secondary technical education, which is an important resource for the social ascension of the lower classes.

In the sociology of education, the family-school relationship presents itself as a subfield whose themes are becoming the object of further exploration, given the complexity of approaches necessary to understanding both institutions and their forms of interaction, which are becoming increasingly heterogeneous. It is necessary to understand some issues from the starting point of our study. One of the most important is the theory of *habitus*, which lays the foundations to our conceptual path, as defined by Bourdieu (1983, p. 60-61):

[...] structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations, which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to

2 During the literature review stage, we located from the internet portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) dissertations that approached the theme of “choice of educational establishment”, which initially helped mapping the existing studies.

attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.

Complementarily, the *habitus* is the starting point of linking “actions” objectively organized as strategies without being the product of a true strategic interaction (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 72). The hypothesis that different families make choices or devise different strategies in choosing an educational establishment shows how necessary it is to conceptualize their strategies. We follow Portes’ (1993, p. 14) definition of strategy: “the set of practices, and ideological or moral attitudes that — consciously or not — each social group practices with a specific end in view.”

The choice of an educational establishment for children is linked to the strategies and practices of familiar learning, which are linked to the social origin of the family nucleus. Through this analysis, we present the intended central objective — to understand the choice process for the families that enroll their children in IFMG-Ribeirão das Neves, using a sample of families that have children in its secondary technical education program.

In order to carry out our study, we analyzed the profiles of a sample of students who are enrolled at the secondary technical education courses of the IFMG-Ribeirão das Neves and their families, investigating the latter’s strategies to choose the IFMG-Ribeirão das Neves for their children. We asked them many questions, including on the choices made during elementary education up to their children’s enrollment in IFMG-Ribeirão das Neves. We paid attention to the most important factors involved in their decisions, considering that each of these families had different ambitions and personal projects when schooling their children.

Initially, the families were selected for an interview according to their educational capital, as defined by Bourdieu (2015): an institutionalized type of cultural capital — the objectification of cultural capital in the form of a diploma. The cultural capital can exist through three different forms:

[...] the incorporated state, under the form of durable dispositions of the organism; in the objectified state, under the forms of cultural goods, paintings, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, or the theorizing or criticism of this theorizing, problematics, etc.; and the institutionalized state, a form of objectification that must be set apart; finally in the institutionalized state, an objectified form which we must set aside because as we see from the academic title, confers the cultural capital which is supposed to guarantee completely original properties. (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 3; 2015, p. 82)

The differentiation by educational capital was present among the interviewed families; there were parents that had incomplete elementary schooling, while other families had completed high school or tertiary education. In order to contemplate other representations and the possibilities that appeared during the research, we added the perspectives of city of origin and parents’ employment besides the year and course of the students. This way, we sought to be more accurate in characterizing the school community of Ribeirão das Neves.

We used interviews because they can approximate the family nucleus and their stories, in order to reach a better understanding of their choices, opening the way to reach the central objective of the study: to comprehend the school-related work of families in their decision process concerning the IFMG-Ribeirão das Neves as the educational establishment for their children.

Our study pointed to the action of the *habitus* of different families in the choice of educational establishment; the family’s school-related work, demonstrated by the pedagogical, psychological and economic efforts undertaken by the families; and the role of mothers in conducting their families’ education.

THE CITY OF RIBEIRÃO DAS NEVES, THE PROFILE OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT THE FEDERAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF MINAS GERAIS (IFMG) AND THEIR FAMILIES

The city of Ribeirão das Neves is divided into three microregions — Justinópolis, Centro and Veneza. The first settlements date from 1927, with the construction of the agricultural jail Nelson Hungria, which first brought workers and, after that, the prisoners' families.³ The city, which is part of the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte, has earned the fame of a "jail city", especially after the establishment of another jail, Antônio Dutra. Urban studies on the settlement of Ribeirão das Neves show the city had irregular occupation, focused on low-income families, through irregular land allotments.

In 2009, Ribeirão das Neves had 331 thousand estimated inhabitants,⁴ and 131 primary education establishments. There were 11 vocational schools in 2018,⁵ but only the IFMG offered secondary education integrated with a vocational school.

In 2010, the literacy rate of the population of Ribeirão das Neves aged between six and 17 years was 83.24%.⁶ The rate of people aged 18–20 years with complete secondary education is 35.67%.⁷ Policies of universalization of primary school have greatly increased this level of schooling amidst the population. The same success, however, was not verified with secondary education, because often the students do not enroll or have to abandon it in order to contribute to the family's income through work.

In order to carry out the research, we analyzed the profiles of a sample of students, and their families,⁸ enrolled in the technical courses offered by the IFMG-Ribeirão das Neves, making use of the school's enrollment form.⁹ We chose the following categories which we considered relevant to our study: gender, course, city of residence, elementary school of origin — whether public or private — and the parents' levels of education and occupation.

The facts show that the IFMG-Ribeirão das Neves has a community of many families with a few similar traits, such as a balance between genders, with an increasing number of women enrolled in technical education. The factors behind the students' choice of courses were not as simple as a vocation or desire, because the IFMG does not offer courses in humanities.¹⁰ The students have three alternatives: those who have an interest in quantitative sciences study electro-electronics or they can choose between two other courses that do not go deep into mathematics: as a third alternative, which we cannot ignore, the student can choose to enroll in the secondary technical school, irrespective of the course or area of interest, if their interest lies in attending a "good school" rather than learning a trade.

Concerning the city of residence and the school's location, we noticed a financial investment for the children's commuting and, even considering that the majority of students reside in Ribeirão

3 Currently, Ribeirão das Neves has six jails, according to data from the Secretary of State and Social Defense of Minas Gerais (SEDS-MG).

4 Available at: <https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas-novoportal/por-cidade-estado-estatisticas.html?t=destaques&c=3154606>. Access on: Sept. 6, 2019.

5 Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira. Sinopse estatística da educação básica 2018. Brasília: Inep, 2019. Available at: <http://portal.inep.gov.br/sinopses-estatisticas-da-educacao-basica>. Access on: Aug. 15, 2019.

6 Schooling rates up to two-year lag. Available at: <http://www.atlasbrasil.org.br/2013/pt/home/>. Access on: Sept. 6, 2019

7 Available at: <http://www.atlasbrasil.org.br/2013/pt/home/>. Access on: Sept. 6, 2019.

8 In 2018, the campus of Ribeirão das Neves had a total of 327 families with children enrolled. We were authorized to analyze 65 enrollment forms, which means 19.9% of the total. We evaluated that these 65 families are a credible sample of the group. We had representatives of all integrated courses, with varying levels of parents' education and jobs, besides different representations of cities of residence, course and classes.

9 In order to use the enrollment forms and analysis of the profiles of the students and families, a Term of Free and Informed Consent (TCLE) was sent to the families and students over 18 years old and a Term of Assent Free and Clarified (TALE) to students under 18.

10 The IFMG-Ribeirão das Neves offers technical secondary education in business, information systems, and electro-electronics.

das Neves, commuting costs are still significant. The campus also receives students from the cities of Belo Horizonte, Esmeraldas and other bordering cities. We noticed a major presence of students that attended public elementary schools. This observation suggests the following: families with a history of enrollment in public schools tend to choose public schools for their children; and families with a history of enrollment in private schools, given the opportunity to attend a public federal school, opt for the latter. Furthermore, the law of reserve vacancies¹¹ must be considered, since it is a mechanism of educational inclusion for a portion of the students.

In matters related to education level and parental occupation, the mothers have more years in school and are better positioned in the job market, which explains why they tend to be more interested in their children's studies. It should be noted as well that the majority of families served by the IFMG belong to different strata of the middle classes (low-middle class and middle-class properly said), which can be inferred by the parents' occupation in non-manual work and their relatively high levels of education, although we cannot ignore the lower-class families that are present in lower numbers.

Thus, after we reviewed the profiles of the students and families that seek the IFMG for secondary technical education, we returned to the main objective of the study: to investigate the choice of school as a result of families' school-related work, following Portes (2001, p. 252). For Portes, this type of work encompasses all the actions — occasional or poorly organized — undertaken by a family in order to secure the enrollment and permanence of their children in the school system, in order to influence their children's school trajectory, allowing them to reach increasingly higher levels of schooling. The choice of educational establishment for the children is linked to the families' schooling strategies and practices, being usually related to the social origin of the family nucleus.

In this perspective, we sought to understand how the choices were made, from early elementary school until enrollment in the IFMG, a relevant trajectory for this study. Lastly, we verified if different families presented different strategies in choosing the educational establishment, since each of them had their own ambitions and projects regarding their children, and considering their social belonging and cultural insertion.

The choice of interviewees used criteria that could reflect the initial sample of 65 families.¹² Therefore, the subgroup of seven families interviewed presented: 1. a diversity between many cities of residence, three families being from Ribeirão das Neves, three from Belo Horizonte and one from Esmeraldas; 2. families with different school capitals; 3. families with different occupations; 4. a diversity between genders: five females and two males; 5. a diversity of courses enrolled: two from information technology, three from business and two from electro-electronics, as well as the students' current year of study: five from the first year, one from the second year, and one from the third year. This way we were led to the families of the students Tatiana, Ágata, Carolina, Pandora, Beatriz, Leonardo and Pedro.¹³

LEARNING ABOUT THE FAMILIES AND THEIR STRATEGIES

THE INTERVIEWED FAMILIES

TATIANA'S FAMILY

Tatiana is in the third year of the technical course in business, comes from nine years of public elementary school, and resides in Ribeirão das Neves. Her mother has incomplete elementary

11 Law nº 12.711, Aug. 29, 2012. Available at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2011-2014/2012/lei/l12711.htm. Access on: Apr. 25, 2019.

12 To reach the subgroup of eight families, a total of 15 (out of the sample of 65) were contacted for the interview and seven agreed to be interviewed.

13 Their actual names were changed by pseudonyms chosen by the students themselves, in order to preserve anonymity.

education and works as a maid in a hospital in Belo Horizonte. Since she works on call (12/36), in the working days she wakes up at 3 a.m. and takes three buses to arrive at work. The father, who has complete secondary education and works as an administrative clerk, was not present at home during the interview. The person whom Tatiana refers to as her sire is the father of her two brothers, her mother's current husband, and he is present in her schooling. Her biological father was only mentioned by the mother when she commented on the allowance of R\$170.00 that she receives from him. Tatiana is part of the non-governmental organization Kolping Minas Gerais,¹⁴ where she takes violin classes and participates in social and cultural activities. The family owns their residence which is located in a low-class district far from Ribeirão das Neves' city center; the residence houses the parents and their three children. The family performs a considerable financial effort — given their belongings — to educate their children, transport being the highest cost.

CAROLINA'S FAMILY

Carolina is in the second year of the technical course in business, also attended nine years of public elementary school, and lives in Belo Horizonte. Her mother works as a nursing assistant and has a technical degree, besides having attended Bachelor of Letters classes at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), without completing the degree. The father has incomplete elementary education and works as a rural producer in another city, in a plot leased from Carolina's grandfather. Carolina is a single child and her mother emphasized how dedicated and responsible she is, mentioning that she never had to scold her in matters of schooling. One salient point is the daughter's autonomy — certainly incentivized by the mother —, showing to be doubtless about her choice for a high school. The fact that the mother had attended classes at UFMG allows her to have a more comprehensive view of education and its bureaucracies. We see in the student, from her experiences, a very salient aspect of (educational) cultural goodwill, a concept introduced by Bourdieu and presented by Nogueira and Nogueira (2017, p. 66) as "the docility, effort and tenacity with which the middle classes dedicate themselves to the effort of acquiring legitimate cultural to compensate the disadvantages coming from a limited cultural capital, with intense adhesion to schooling values." Carolina makes a heavy effort concerning schooling questions, besides possessing a wide understanding of which high schools are the best, offer the best classes, have good infrastructure, high qualification of the teaching body and future possibilities of schooling.

BEATRIZ'S FAMILY

Beatriz is in the first year of the technical course in business, having also come from nine years in a public elementary school, and she lives in Belo Horizonte. Her mother has incomplete secondary education and works as a clerk in a flower shop, located in the southern area of Belo Horizonte. The father, who also has incomplete secondary education, works as a waiter and is also present in his daughters' schooling. The family lives in Venda Nova, a district relatively close to Ribeirão das Neves, but 20 km distant from the IFMG campus. In their house, which is lent by Carolina's maternal aunt, there are four people — the parents and their two children. During the interview, the mother told emotional stories of her "battle" to educate her children, having worked as a housemaid and cleaning lady. She even saved on work transportation, doing part of the trajectory on foot, so that the eldest daughter could take classes at a preparatory school for the ENEM. She rarely spent money on leisure or different foods in order to buy books for her children. Ever since they

14 The Kolping Society is a Catholic, social and popular non-profit movement that serves workers and their families. It has historically stood for the young members of society. It is present in over 60 countries, having been founded by the priest Adolf Kolping (1813–1865), in Köln, Germany, on May 6, 1849. Available at: <https://kolpingminasgerais.org.br/index.php/home-2/quem-somos/>. Access on: Mar. 9, 2020.

were children, she put an effort to inculcate reading habits in them. As they grew up, since the couple did not have money for vacations, they bought their children the books requested by them. Two traits of Beatriz's family must be emphasized: their asceticism — seen in the ways of saving money for educational actions — and schooling goodwill — seen in the effort to compensate for their schooling disadvantages. The mother externalized how meaningful her daughters' education is for her, something she inherited from her own mother, who could not educate eight children “for a long time”, and always believed in the changing power of education.

ÁGATA'S FAMILY

Ágata is in the first year of the technical course in information technology, after nine years of public elementary school, and she lives in the city of Esmeraldas. Her mother has completed high school and is a housewife; she informed us that she also makes craftwork, but did not say how much she earns from it. The father has incomplete elementary education and works as a bus driver. Since the mother does not work away from home, we understand the father is the breadwinner. They live in their own house and the mother does not work in order to take care of the children. During the interview, the mother became emotional when narrating the “battle” for the children's education and her complete dedication to them. She said that, in Esmeraldas, besides the poor quality of public services, school transportation is her biggest concern. We noticed that the mother understands not only the schooling bureaucracies, but also the ones related to other services provided by the city, and that she knows how to demand her rights as a citizen. When she learned about the implementation of the IFMG in Ribeirão das Neves, besides going directly to the campus, she called their secretary many times to answer her queries and “ran to it”.

PANDORA'S FAMILY

Pandora is in the first year of the technical course in electro-electronics, after nine years of public elementary school, and she resides in Ribeirão das Neves. Her mother works as a sales assistant in the southern region of Belo Horizonte, with a harsh routine of leaving home at 5h40 a.m. and returning at 8h30 p.m. The mother has a degree in Letters from FAMINAS-BH, but does not work in the area. The family lives in a low-income district in Justinópolis, one of the three microregions of Ribeirão das Neves, bordering Belo Horizonte. The mother and her two children — Pandora and her older brother — live in their own apartment. The mother educates, takes care of and supports the two children alone. During the interview, Pandora's father's name was not mentioned, neither was his participation in their life, save for the mention of an occasion when he took Pandora to compete for a grant in a preparatory school. The children make jokes about their school difficulties, such as being part of classes considered “difficult” in school, having trouble with math and other issues that emerged during the interview. They also joke about the way their mother firmly conducts their schooling. The older brother said: “What choice? Here, she's the only who chooses!”, referring to the fact that his sister is attending the IFMG and that their mother chose the secondary technical education for Pandora, which was confirmed by the mother. It was possible to notice that the mother's training — she is a bachelor in Letters, Portuguese and Spanish — gives her the capacity to guide the children's schooling trajectory. The mother values reading and studying other languages, and she expects her daughter to have these opportunities in the IFMG. She has also followed Pandora's performance closely, attending school meetings and knowing the teachers by their names, whom she talks to individually about her daughter.

LEONARDO'S FAMILY

Leonardo is in the first year of the technical course in information technology, having also come from public elementary education, but not entirely; he was in a private school for the first

two years. He resides in Belo Horizonte, in a district close to Ribeirão das Neves. His mother works as a Portuguese teacher and has a degree in Letters from UNI-BH. His father is also a physics and math teacher, having also completed tertiary education. The proximity to Ribeirão das Neves is not limited to the geographical location, because the mother works in a private school and has relatives in the city. In their house, the mother lives with her two children, and she alone organizes and manages their family life, working double shifts. Their father lives in the central region of the state of São Paulo and, judging by the mother's words, he also participates in their schooling. The mother explained that she prefers public schools. Her knowledge about education is wide and deep. This is a quality common among the converted, understood here as families richer in cultural capital, represented by the children of teachers and intellectuals that possesses an entire legacy of data on the school world (its financing, values, hierarchies), from which depends the (good) application of their school investments (choice of the establishment, of the way of studying, the courses, etc.), according to Nogueira and Nogueira (2017, p. 67). Leonardo's mother, with 22 years of experience teaching elementary school students, can construct with her children a schooling projected shared collectively. She reported participating in a discussion group on Paulo Freire. A Black woman, a mother, teacher, and a student of Freire.

PEDRO'S FAMILY

Pedro is in the first year of the technical course in electro-electronics, and comes from a private school, where he spent his entire elementary education. His parents are microentrepreneurs, the mother has finished high school and the father has a technical diploma. They have a salon to rent in their property. The parents work exclusively in the management and maintenance of the salon and scheduling of events. It was visible how their children's schooling was shared by both parents. This was the only interview that included all the family members, in which, besides Pedro and his mother, the father and two younger siblings were present. Concerning Pedro and his siblings' schooling trajectory in a private school in Ribeirão das Neves, the family showed not to trust public schools, always opting for private ones. However, due to the teaching quality offered by the IFMG, his parents incentivized Pedro to take the admission exam. We can see asceticism as a family trait, following Nogueira and Nogueira (2017, p. 65), in their austere lifestyle, renouncing short-term pleasures in order to fund future projects. This was precisely the content of their mother's narrative, reporting the rigidity of their conduct concerning profits, by saving money for the education and formation of the children, and making choices such as not changing their car yearly and reducing vacation travels to the beach to once a year, whenever possible, and with a very austere approach.

The interviews brought a diversity of experiences that converse with the theoretical references mentioned as conducive foundations of this study. All the interviews took place in the students' respective homes, in an environment of interest and participation, most of the times with the presence of other members of the family nucleus, such as the students' siblings. A point in common with the interviewed families is that almost all are homeowners; only one family lived in a lent house, a factor that favors stability. Being a homeowner, besides meaning security, also allows families to free resources so that these families can develop dispositions and keep their children in the school; following Portes (2001, p. 74), this factor is taken to be important in the construction of a less problematic social and schooling trajectory.

From the knowledge built, we hoped to identify the strategies used by families to enroll their children in the IFMG, considering questions related to the children's schooling trajectory during elementary school, investments made during that trajectory and lived experiences and expectations after being admitted to the IFMG. The testimonies showed the continuous effort made by students and their families to stay in school. The initial adaptation affected them all, because taking a full-time

course is not common in high school. The economic question, which is prevalent in the transportation costs, is a concern for some families who have a tighter budget, needing financial assistance from the institution through student assistance grants. Another point that relates the full-time schedule of the school and the financial issue is the fact that parents incentivize their children's education instead of having them work to help at home, as is the case in the majority of the low-income students in that age group. Maybe this is not an important question for the interviewed families, but, for the ones belonging to lower-income strata, keeping a child in a full-time school might be a fundamental maneuver for continuing studies in the future. According to Bourdieu (2015, p. 52), the same objective conditions that definite the parents' attitudes and dominate the most important choices of the schooling trajectory also dominate the children's attitude towards these same choices and, consequently, their entire attitude towards school.

The families presented differences related to their social belonging, an identification that was perceived when analyzing traits such as parents' level of education, occupation, status and local of residence. Out of the seven families analyzed, four had at least one member that took classes or finished tertiary education — a relevant point, as Bourdieu argued:

The presence in the familial circle of a parent that had attended classes in tertiary education or that has completed a degree shows that these families had an original cultural situation, in which they were affected descending mobility or they have an attitude towards ascension that distinguishes them from other similar families. (Bourdieu, 1966, p. 328; 2015, p. 48)

Another point to be mentioned is the educational history of the children-student. The seven have a continuous educational trajectory, without any interruptions or repeating a year. During the interviews, their mothers corroborated their children's "competences", qualifying them as "excellent", "dedicated" students getting high grades in elementary school. The choice the educational establishment, as one of the actions undertaken by the families for the best possible educational trajectory for their children, takes place in an environment surrounded by expectations and strategies related to the school. For Nogueira and Nogueira, such actions are not result from a fully conscious rational calculation:

Each social group, due to its position in the social space, will be forming throughout time practical knowledge about what is and what is not possible of being achieved by the members inside their own concrete social reality, that in which they act, and the most adequate forms of doing it. (Nogueira and Nogueira, 2017, p. 45)

There is not a common behavior pattern concerning the children's school issues, but rather a set of incorporated actions, measures that are applied according to individual possibilities. The *habitus*, a concept made popular by Bourdieu, helped in the necessary theoretical foundation of this research. According to it, social practices are structured, presenting typical properties of the social position of those who produce them, because their very individual subjectivity, their way of perceiving and appreciating the world, their preferences, their tastes, their aspirations, would be previously structured in relation to the moment of action (Nogueira and Nogueira, 2017, p. 25).

These measures are noticed in the pedagogical, psychological, social and economic efforts undertaken by the families in the enrollment and maintenance of their children in the IFMG. This way, the differentiating and defining strategies of the families for choosing the educational establishment of their children are specified in accordance with each reality, making part of a more ample process of thinking about children's schooling; and, even if certain actions are similar to each other, the impact and effort to put them in practice affects each family differently. According to Portes (1993, p. 115),

the schooling strategies used by the families are not part of pre-established prescriptions that one can apply when faced with adversities — instead, they belong to an enduring learning process.

Lastly, another point observed, and to be considered, is the ethno-racial belonging of the interviewed students. The research had three Brown and four White students. Ethno-racial themes were not part of the study's objective, no Black students were available for interview and we did not question the interviewees on their race. However, the fact that we did not find Black students among the interviewees suggests a low representation of these students in a more ample context of the educational community and implies the fight to enter in an institution such as IFMG, even with the institution making use of the reserve law in all its modalities and offered courses.

THE CHOICE OF EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT

In view of the families' stories and of their choices having origin in the students' elementary school years, we can see the influence of the "geography of opportunities" (Koslinski and Alves, 2012). This is a concept based on the idea that the structure, quality and access to opportunities, as well as the perception on the opportunities, vary according the socioeconomic indicators of neighboring districts. Using this reference, there are families with greater or lower quality of opportunities of educational establishments. It is fact that, in the choices of educational establishment in the earlier years, all interviewed families agreed that this was a relevant theme.

In order for a family to think about the possibility of their children having a long school life — which, according to Viana (2008, p. 47) is understood as remaining in the school system until tertiary education —, the construction of previous strategies is necessary in order to trace a path, as Bourdieu (2015, p. 58) once wrote: "the cards must be played early". The choice for better schools or the most viable given the organization of a family, participation in the school community, monitoring of their performance, as well as continuous incentives given to the children were central measures employed by the interviewed families in their children's schooling process. And, even with realities of life and their different perceptions on education, they reached a common point: coming to enroll their children in IFMG-Ribeirão das Neves, a "good school."

What is it, though, that they consider to be a "good school", generally speaking? The answers reveal the beliefs, certainties and desires entrusted to educational institutions. Thoughts such as "to be someone in life", "a school must have discipline", "a focus on learning", "good infrastructure and teaching body", among others, put in evidence the different views amongst the parents. There is a desire, even an intention by the families, that their children have a longer school life than they did and that they follow their studies in tertiary education. As Portes (1993, p. 128) argued, a good school is one that allows its graduates to continue their studies and insert them in the most profitable segments of the school system. For Tatiana's mother, who did not have chance for a longer educational training, the "good" school is the one that teaches her children and that can give them the tools to have a better life than hers:

A good school is one that can really help our children to grow up and conquer something, to be someone in life. Thus, if a school gives this support to our children, it is a good school. (Tatiana's mother)

In this sense, Portes (1993, p. 113) argued that

To be "someone in life" fundamentally means to not be like someone's parents, who feel they are "not someone" given the social devaluation of their majorly manual occupations. Thus, it is taught at home, on a daily basis, that there is a need to deny the parents and what they mean socially, through the denial of their occupations.

We understand that, from this association, comes a great effort by the parents to provide better training for their children, besides their valorization of school, by trusting schools to give their children chances of a better position in their professional future. Beatriz's mother is an example of someone who did not have conditions to study beyond the early years of elementary school and had to start working earlier. Her children's schooling trajectory is a reason for her to feel emotional and, initially, upon being questioned what a "good school" should be like, she spoke of a greater attention with her daughter's schoolwork; even with limited schooling knowledge, she always made sure to ask about her school day:

Oh, I think it is what they learn, sometimes I see, she arrives here all excited, "mom, the class was like this". I ask: what did you learn? I don't understand nothing, but I get, like, super happy that what I don't know she does. But, was it good? Did you like it? "I liked it." So, I'm happy too, like, when I enter in the IFMG, I feel, like, very happy. I don't have study, and yet I managed to get it for them... [crying]. (Beatriz's mother)

In the interviews seeking to know what drove the choice for the IFMG, we sought to find the most relevant issues. During the study's development, we grouped other questions, such as: if the choice was done conjointly between the parents and children or unilaterally; if there was any influence from someone outside the family; and why opt for a technical secondary school instead of a regular one. The reports highlights the parents' desire for a school of "better quality" for their children, with greater opportunities, but there is also an acceptance, by the children, of a shared desire with their families, following Portes (2008, p. 68).

For all the families, the choice of the IFMG was not reduced to wanting and getting into it. The admission exam presented itself as a barrier/challenge to be overcome. For this reason, the measures — both financial and of time — taken in the form of extra studies, that reinforced the contents necessary to be learned for a successful exam, were a strategy used by all families. The ways of learning about the selective process also were similar, involving reading the public announcement, studying older exams, building study groups, attending classes at preparatory schools, researching the other competitors' profile and constantly consulting the institution's internet portal. Out of the seven students, four attended classes at preparatory schools and/or extra math classes (Tatiana, Ágata, Beatriz and Pedro), two studied alone at home (Carolina and Pandora) and one (Leonardo) participated in a special training and study program.

The families' efforts showed to be varied, with greater or lower economic involvement according to their conditions, and with a lot of dedication from the children — who, judging by the families' statements, have always been dedicated to their studies during elementary school (none of them repeated a year). Their trajectories indicate the possibility of longer schooling. They all manifested the desire of enrolling in universities.

We can notice that the ease of the direction taken through school-related choices comes from the cultural capital acquired by the family. Using Leonardo's family as an example, as "converted" people, they possess knowledge of the school system and make conscious use of this knowledge, following Nogueira (1997, p. 124):

[...] an important component of this familial cultural capital is an entire legacy of knowledge on the school world (its working ways, its values, its hierarchies), which suppose a type of specific competence that only a certain level of instruction can favor. It is from this capital of information that the school strategies rely on or, in other

terms, the (good) application of school investments (choice of the establishment, of the study way, of the courses, etc.).

By the end of these interviews, we noticed that the interviewed families believe they have obtained results from the strategies used to promote their children's schooling. Amongst the similarities and differences in the actions for enrollment and permanence in the IFMG-Ribeirão das Neves, all of them share a degree of satisfaction with their children's high school trajectory. There is encouragement for them to continue their studies in a more elevated level, through tertiary education. The concretization of a secondary technical education, for these families, does not close the school cycle, but rather extends it with a view for the next step.

FINAL REMARKS

The expansion of vocational and technical education as represented by the Brazilian federal institutes brought to many cities of the country the opportunity to study in technical degrees integrated to high school, an option desired by some and unknown by the majority. The presence of a federal technical school transforms the initial configuration of city, even when they are closer to metropolitan centers, such as Ribeirão das Neves. Its IFMG campus incentivized the mobilization of local families and those coming from neighboring cities, looking for better education for their children.

The main objective of our research, to understand the families' process of choosing an educational establishment, allowed us to identify the different strategies used by them and how defining they were for the specific choice of the IFMG-Ribeirão das Neves, considering that each family has personal desires and inclinations related to the schooling of their children.

In synthesis, we sought to demonstrate that the family's school-related work is a process in which the choice of educational establishment is one of the actions undertaken in favor of children's schooling. For the families in question, such process started earlier, being seen in small strategies that laid the foundations for their children's schooling, among them psychological incentives and support, incentives to reading, participation in the school's daily life, particular classes, extra courses, extra spending in transport — measures undertaken with the purpose of securing children's entrance and permanence in the education system. In summary, we would like to stress the relevance of the participation of the family nucleus, whose statements were important for this study, indicating the importance of listening to the families that belong to any school community.

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How to cite this article: SANTANA, Denise Ribeiro. The choice of the federal institute of education, science and technology of Minas Gerais/Ribeirão das Neves campus and the school-related work of families. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, v. 30, e300080, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1413-24782025300081>

Conflicts of interest: The author declares they don't have any commercial or associative interest that represents conflict of interests in relation to the manuscript.

Funding: The study didn't receive funding.

Data availability statement: The research data are not available.

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Received on August 31, 2022

Revised on November 6, 2023

Approved on July 2, 2024

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