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School Dropout and Permanence: analyzing perspectives of education workers at the IFSC

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ABSTRACT – School Dropout and Permanence: analyzing perspectives of education workers at the IFSC[1]. From the perspective of education workers from several campuses of the Federal Institute of Santa Catarina (Instituto Federal de Santa Catarina - IFSC), this paper seeks to analyze the factors that involve school dropout or the permanence of students in Professional and Technological Education (Educação Profissional e Tecnológica - EPT). Developed as a case study from a dialectical perspective, the research, with a qualitative approach, highlighted the different perspectives of workers on the multiple and complex motivators of dropping out or staying at school. It revealed the fragmentation, the individualization, the blaming of its subjects; the existence of specific actions to support permanence and the absence of evaluations and interventions aimed at modifying the dual and excluding structure of EPT.
Keywords: **School Dropout. School Permanence. Professional and Technological Education. Education Workers. IFSC.**

RESUMO – Abandono e Permanência Escolar: analisando olhares de trabalhadores da educação do IFSC[1]. A partir do olhar de trabalhadores da educação de diversos *campi* do Instituto Federal de Santa Catarina (IFSC), o presente trabalho busca analisar os fatores que envolvem o abandonar ou permanecer dos estudantes da Educação Profissional e Tecnológica (EPT). Desenvolvida como estudo de caso sob uma perspectiva dialética, a pesquisa, de abordagem qualitativa, evidenciou os diferentes olhares dos trabalhadores sobre os múltiplos e complexos motivadores do abandono ou permanência escolar. Revelou a fragmentação, a individualização, a culpabilização de seus sujeitos, a existência de ações pontuais de apoio à permanência e a ausência de avaliações e intervenções voltadas para modificar a estrutura, dual e excludente, da EPT.
Palavras-chave: **Abandono Escolar. Permanência Escolar. Educação Profissional e Tecnológica. Trabalhadores da Educação. IFSC.**

Introduction

The expansion of the Federal Network of Professional, Scientific and Technological Education (Federal Network) increased the democratization of the offer of this type of education, providing many young people and adults from different regions, social and cultural classes with access to quality public professional education.

The Federal Network, which until 2002 consisted of 140 units, underwent expansion and internalization in the country after 2005, with the beginning of the Expansion Plan of the Federal Network of Professional Education, totaling, in 2021, 661 units of professional education allocated in 38 Federal Institutes (Institutos Federais - IFs), two Federal Centers for Technological Education (Centros Federais de Educação Tecnológica - CEFET), the Federal Technological University of Paraná (Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná - UTFPR), 22 Technical Schools linked to federal universities and Colégio Pedro II.

If, on the one hand, the expansion of the Federal Network democratized access to professional education, on the other hand, it evidenced school dropout[2] in this teaching modality, which, according to a study by Zanin (2014), presents very high school dropout rates throughout the history of professional education in the country, which has generated challenges and efforts, both to understand this process and to overcome it.

Corroborating this situation, a survey carried out by Érica Gallindo (2020) demonstrated that in a total of 1,267,609 entrants from 2009 to 2020 in high school technical courses (on-campus) at Federal Institutes, 492,188 students (38.83% of enrollments) stopped attending courses. This information can be confirmed when analyzing the data related to the academic efficiency index[3] of the Federal Institutes on the Nilo Peçanha Platform[4] (Brazil, 2021), which pointed to "cycle evasion" at a percentage of 50.31% in 2017, 49.4% in 2018, 43.17% in 2019 and 50.28% in 2020, in all courses offered.

In addition to this, other studies on the subject, such as those by Silva, Pelissari and Steimbach (2013), Fritsch (2017), Zanin (2014), among others, who dialogued with students from Professional and Technological Education (EPT), present figures that denounce the harsh face of school exclusion present in this type of education. In this sense, they indicate the pertinence of investigating dropout and permanence in school and understanding the multiple and complex factors that involve them.

Advancing in these aspects, this investigation sought, from a dialectical perspective, to give voice to education workers, with the objective of analyzing, from their perspectives, the factors that involve the dropout and school permanence of students of subsequent technical courses in the Control and Industrial Processes Technological Axis offered at Federal Institute of Santa Catarina (Instituto Federal de Santa Catarina - IFSC).

The Research Trajectory and The Characterization of its Subjects

In order to address the issue of school dropout and permanence in the EPT, it was decided to approach the phenomenon through a research with a qualitative approach, from a dialectical perspective, since the problem is demarcated by the social reality and requires, at the same time that it enables, the free manifestation of the investigated subjects regarding their information interests, beliefs and desires (Aquino, 2014). This option was taken bearing in mind that the dialectical perspective, as a research method, allows approaching the totality of the researched phenomena, investigating the causes, consequences, contradictions, relations and qualitative and quantitative dimensions, if necessary, that involve the problem.

In order to reach the objective of the research, the modality used was the case study, circumscribing the universe of the research to six campuses of the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Santa Catarina (Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia de Santa Catarina - IFSC) that offered subsequent technical professional education courses from the Control and Industrial Processes Technological Axis in different regions of the state of Santa Catarina: Chapecó, Criciúma, Florianópolis, Itajaí, Jaraguá do Sul and Lages. The IFSC Rectory also constituted the referred universe.

The choice for the institution and courses was due to the high rates of school dropout registered therein, which, in the surveyed courses of the IFSC, presented in the period of application of the research, in 2018, a percentage of "dropout in the cycle" of 58.74%, reaching, in one of the campuses participating in the research, a percentage of about 84% (Brazil, 2021), reason why elements were presented that could contribute to the identification and reflection on the motivators of dropout and permanence of students in these courses.

The data that supported the research were obtained through semi-structured interviews carried out in face-to-face meetings in 2018, with 36 public agents, of which 12 held teaching positions; 8 were technicians in the pedagogical sector;10 were part of institutional Permanence and Success Groups[5] and 6 of them occupied the role of managers in the teaching directorates of the campuses.

The 12 participating teachers were male, engineers or technologists and taught in technical courses at medium and higher levels at the institution. Of the 8 pedagogical technicians, there are: 5 pedagogues, 1 technician in educational matters, 1 psychologist and 1 student assistant, with a total of 7 females. Regarding the 6 managers, all of them were male, teachers, bachelors and taught in subjects in the technical area. About the 10 public agents who were part of Permanence and Success Groups: 6 were male teachers – only 1 had a bachelor's degree and the others were graduated with pedagogical training and none of them worked directly in the Control and Industrial Processes courses; plus 4 female administrative technicians in education (Técnicos Administrativos em Educação - TAE) – 3 technicians in educational matters and 1 student assistant.

This characterization shows, on the researched campuses, the predominance of men in teaching and in the management of teaching directorates and of women occupying more spaces as pedagogical techniques in the institution, an issue that, as Greschechen and Tamanini (2018) point out, highlights the sexual division of work, represented by the hierarchization of positions and social determination that historically naturalizes that professions related to care are considered typically feminine, while those involving the production of goods for society are socially considered to be masculine.

About the time of exercise in the EPT, there were since newcomer's public agents until those who had already exercised the profession for 30 years at the IFSC. Out of 12 teachers, 5 had been at the IFSC for 2 to 5 years; 6 had already worked for 8 to 12 years and 1 had worked at the institution for over 26 years. Among these, 11 teachers already had experience in education in other education networks, most of which came from the private professional education network. Of this total number of workers, 4 had no work experience in their training area in the industry.

Most of the technical pedagogical participants (6) worked at the IFSC for between 3 and 7 years. One of them had been at the institution for only 1 year and the other for 11 years. However, all of them already had work experience in education in other networks and levels of education, since 7 of the 8 technical participants had been working in education for more than 15 years, and 1 of them stated that he had already worked in education for 37 years. Of the 6 managers, 1 joined the IFSC 2 years ago; 4 worked from 6 to 12 years at the institution and 1 had already worked at the place for over 30 years. Regarding professional experience, 5 already worked in education in other networks before joining the IFSC and, considering that all are bachelors (without pedagogical training), 5 previously worked in their areas of initial training.

Regarding the 10 public agents of the Permanence and Success Groups, 9 of them worked at the IFSC for less than 7 years, 7 between 2 months and 3 years and 2 from 6 to 7 years; only one with more than 25 years of work in the institution. The vast majority – 9 out of 10 – had experience in the field of education before joining the IFSC, having worked between 18 and 34 years in different levels of education.

Out of a total of 36 education workers participating in the survey, 33 of them started exercising their profession in the Federal Network after 2005, when the network's expansion plan took place, showing that, in addition to the democratization of access, the expansion made it possible, also, to many public agents, to exercise their profession in federal public schools.

School Dropout and Permanence at the IFSC

As Fritsch (2017, p. 84) ponders, school dropout "[…] is a complex phenomenon, the result of multiple causes linked to objective and subjective factors and variables that need to be understood in the socio-economic, political and cultural context, in the educational system and

in teaching institutions" and understanding them has been the subject of work and research in the educational area that raise, on the part of institutions, concerns that generate follow-up projects and studies to prevent dropout and encourage students to stay.

In this perspective, it is understood that the aspects of school dropout and permanence involve personal, social, economic, political and cultural issues, external and internal to the school, dialectically related to each other, without overlapping the importance of one factor over the other, but rather mutually related.

This was also the understanding of the 10 education workers, members of the IFSC Permanence and Success Groups, research participants, who corroborated the idea that the motivators of school dropout and permanence are multifactorial, and that dialoguing on this topic requires addressing these different motivators.

Disregarding the 10 workers who are part of the institution's Permanence and Success Groups, who, by virtue of their work, have the issue of school dropout as one of their institutional concerns, only 3 of the other 26 participating agents - teachers, education managers and pedagogical technicians – established, in their answers about the reasons for dropout and permanence, some relationship with a follow-up or a study carried out at the institution or on the campus. The others reported not being aware of any study or survey of motivators and manifested themselves based fundamentally on their daily experiences in the EPT.

In the dialogue carried out with the 26 teaching staff, teaching managers and pedagogical technicians about the reasons for dropout, it was also noticed the multiplicity of factors that the theme involves, presenting, in their answers, questions internal to the institution, external to it and individual of the students, as summarized in Table 1, whose responses were organized by category of participating subjects.

Table 1 – Reasons for School Dropout

Motivators for dropping out of school	Responses from research participants		
	Pedagogical (8 participants)	Managers (6 participants)	Teachers (12 participants)
Learning difficulties	04	04	11
Difficulties reconciling school and work	05	02	09
Did not identify with the course	01	02	08
Personal/family problems	02	03	05
Immediacy/quit easily	--	01	05
Financial problems	02	--	03
Teaching Methodology/ Didactics	04	01	02
Teacher-student relationship	02	--	02
Demotivation	02	--	01
Health problems	02	01	--
Do not value public education	--	--	02

Mobility/change of course	--	01	--
Theory-practice relationship difficulties	01	--	--
Lack of institutional care	01	--	--
Difficulty with transportation	--	--	08

Source: Own authorship based on research data.

Although there is agreement on some motivators in the speeches of all segments surveyed, such as learning difficulties and reconciling work with studies, the results presented in Table 1 indicate that, in general, the answers are related to the functional position of the respondents, with motivators that are more evidenced by some of these segments, such as the fact that students do not identify with the course, an issue pointed out with more evidence by the teachers, or what relates dropout to the methodology and teaching didactics, which are presented more prominently in the speeches of the agents who work in the pedagogical coordinations. Likewise, there are factors silenced in some segments, such as elements involving the teacher-student relationship that do not appear in the managers' speech.

However, when the question refers to the reasons for permanence, the answers show greater diversity, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2 – Reasons for School Permanence

Permanence Motivators	Responses from research participants		
	Pedagogical (8 participants)	Managers (6 participants)	Teachers (12 participants)
Perspective to improve at work	02	01	06
Student embracement	05	02	01
Identification with the course	02	02	01
PAEVS*	02	02	01
Relate theory and practice	02	01	--
Learning	02	--	01
Motivation	01	--	01
Do Research and Extension	--	01	01
Quality of Teachers	01	--	01
Structure/Laboratories	--	01	01
Take practical classes	--	--	01
Student Mentoring	--	01	--
Good teacher-student relationship	01	--	--
Courses suitable for the public and level	--	--	01
Work with other networks**	01	--	--

*Assistance Program for Students in Social Vulnerability (Programa de Atendimento aos Estudantes em Vulnerabilidade Social – PAEVS)
** In this study, Working with other networks is understood as the articulation and implementation of actions with other bodies or sectors, such as health, social service or other educational networks, in order to help the student permanence.
Source: Own authorship based on research data.

In the same way as for dropping out, the motivators for school permanence refer to external and internal issues to the institution and individual students. It is noteworthy that, similarly, the permanence factors that involve teaching practice, such as teaching methodologies, didactics, teacher-student relationship, among others, were also less prominent in the answers of the teachers participating in the research.

The results shown in Tables 1 and 2 provided several reflections on the factors that supported these perceptions, presented in sequence.

Teaching-Learning in EPT as a Factor of School Dropout or Permanence

The teaching-learning process is presented as an important factor for leaving or remaining in school. Presented as the main reason for dropping out, the difficulty of learning was cited by 73% of the 26 research participants, being indicated by 92% of the 12 teachers, 67% of the six managers and 50% of the eight pedagogical technicians.

Present in the speeches[6] of teachers, pedagogical technicians and education managers, this reason for abandonment, in many moments, was presented by them as a national issue and resulting from a deficient basic education:

> Teacher 4 – Other difficulties we have: the question of the background that the student brings. We have students who have problems, especially the public that attends at night, who sometimes had a somewhat weak educational base. Mainly in Math.

> Manager 3 – I think we do have a very serious problem in Basic Education in our country […] there is this very, very, very large gap.

It is noteworthy, however, the fact that learning difficulty is highly indicated as a dropout factor by all participating segments, as opposed to the little indication of "ease" of learning as a reason for permanence, which represented only 17% of the participants. speeches of teachers and 13% of pedagogical technicians, as shown in Table 2.

These questions show the importance of learning in the analysis of dropout and permanence motivators. In many moments, this motivator appears as an external factor to Professional and Technological Education, resulting from a deficient Basic Education; in others, as an individual factor, turning to blaming the student for gaps and shortcomings in their formative path or their cognitive issues.

When evaluating the issues that relate dropout and school failure to the capitalist system, Fornari (2010) denounces those that attribute to the individual the responsibility for dropping out of studies and blame them for the failure. For the author, it is common for studies that are based on conservative liberal conceptions to associate school dropout and failure with the individual characteristics of the subjects, indicating, for example, issues such as that low school performance is a consequence of a lack of particular will and family, thus disregarding the multiple economic, political and cultural factors that involve the subject in a given context.

It must be considered that learning difficulties involve economic, social, cultural and political issues, and that capitalist education is exclusionary and reproduces an unequal society. In this context, learning difficulties will always be present in a devalued education system, which does not have public policies committed to quality public education for a large portion of Brazilian society and which reinforces a structural duality, in which teaching for the population with greater socioeconomic vulnerability presents numerous problems, such as lack of investment, devaluation of education workers, deficient physical structures, crowded classrooms, among other issues.

Corroborating this situation, data from the Nilo Peçanha Platform (Brazil, 2021) show that 78.6% (1,632 enrollments) of IFSC students who attended subsequent technical courses in the area of Industrial Control and Processes, in the evening period, in 2018 (year of application of the interviews), had a per capita family income of up to a minimum wage and a half, and it can be inferred, with this socioeconomic profile, that they were students who, in general, did their Basic Education in public schools that, considering the Brazilian reality, present the difficulties described above.

To overcome this situation and the shortcomings that may justify blaming students and lead them to school failure, while the chronic lack of investment and study and work conditions are not overcome, especially in public establishments, actions are needed that favor the permanence of the students in the schools. In this sense, the results of studies by Dore, Sales and Castro (2014, p. 383) on the factors that strengthen school permanence point to the importance of academic support for students, such as monitoring actions, extra classes and psychopedagogical support. Likewise, the authors announce the need for reflection and improvement of curricular and pedagogical practices. They also point out that overcoming learning difficulties is not an exclusive task of teachers or the teaching institution, but also requires,

> […] formulation of integrated educational policies, a new student assistance, in which the pedagogical dimensions go beyond the merely assistentialist logic, as well as an effective pedagogical follow-up to act preventively in relation to students who are at risk of school dropout and retention (Dore; Sales; Castro, 2014, p. 16).

In addition to these external motivators, which interfere in the teaching and learning process, it is necessary to look at the internal motivators, which involve teaching work, such as methodology, didactics and the teacher-student relationship. In the answers given to the questions that approached these aspects, of the 12 teachers participating in the research, only 2 mentioned that the teaching practice, the methodology and the teacher-student relationship can be factors that would motivate school dropout, showing that EPT teachers do not realize much themselves as part of the process of dropping out or staying at school, which would lead to a more detailed investigation.

This perception refers to EPT teacher training policies and actions, which, historically, have been treated in a fragmented and indi-

vidualized way, consistent with a dual and individualized educational structural model. Since there is no degree for technical disciplines, the teachers come from different professional fields, but not from Education. Their initial training as bachelors and previous experiences in environments other than school, plus supplements often with low pedagogical content, qualify them for technical disciplines, leaving them responsible for the search for a more consistent pedagogical training, which allows them to better understand the educational process of their students.

Under these conditions, equally, one cannot individualize actions and assign responsibility for the school dropout process to teachers. In many moments, they also feel abandoned by the lack of training and institutional support to help them understand the school phenomenon and the particularities of Professional and Technological Education, as explained in the speech of a manager:

> Manager 3 – In some situations, the feeling of powerlessness that we have... and some problems that we see and that sometimes we have no idea how to intervene, how to do it or how to help, so I have many cases of students, for example, with some kind of difficulty and I don't know how to deal with that.

This speech highlights the challenges faced by professionals who are working in teaching and points to the need and urgency of teacher training policies, initial and continued ones, as teaching work is an important factor to ensure student permanence in Professional and Technological Education.

Reconciling work and study: an ambiguous challenge

Issues involving the world of work were other prominent factors when discussing the reasons for dropping out and remaining in school. In the opinion of the participants, one of the main reasons for dropping out by students is the difficulty in reconciling work and study (62% of the total responses). This is thus configured as a relevant motivator for school dropout, since most of the student body of subsequent technical courses of the Control and Industrial Processes Technological Axis is composed of workers. Allied to this effort to reconcile the demands of work and study are the difficulties inherent in the fact that these students often return to school after years of absence.

> Teacher 9 – The subsequent one is composed of 95% of workers. There are many of them, and workers in these conditions: ten, eight years without studying; without entering a classroom. They are workers from all areas, many of whom are outside the electromechanical area and many within that area as well, but on the night shift, there are young people too, but most are workers.

This description corresponds to the profile of the student in these courses and also represents a challenge to teaching at Federal Institutes, because in addition to the heterogeneity present in the institu-

tion's proposal for its training itinerary (offering courses at different levels), these teachers find in their classrooms a heterogeneous audience, both in terms of age group and worldviews and experiences in the world of work, presenting difficulties in incorporating themselves into school practice.

However, in an ambiguous way, the fact that the students are workers was presented, in the speeches of the agents, both as a reason for permanence and abandonment. At the same time that the difficulty of reconciling work and study can lead to school dropout, the perspectives of improvements in working conditions resulting from being studying sound like a motivator to stay. Some of the teachers interpret this situation as follows:

> Teacher 7 – Changing work shifts is very big, this has to be included in your work 'ah! teacher! I even made it halfway through the semester, but now I have to change shifts, I won't be able to come anymore'. Or they come here, arrive at eight o'clock and have to leave at ten, then they say 'teacher, I was sleeping, I was resting, because I worked until six, now I'm back at eleven, ten at night' (motivator for dropping out of school)

> Teacher 3 – There are students whose main motivator is that they are already hired at the company, they know that the technical diploma will make them grow in there, the technical knowledge will make them grow in there. Some other students understand that they are there learning something too, improving the curriculum to enter the dispute in the job market (motivator of permanence).

The difficulties in reconciling work and study, however, have been shown to be a major reason for dropping out of school both in research that dialogues with education workers and with students, as shown by studies carried out on the phenomenon in Professional and Technological Education, such as those developed by Zanin (2014; 2019), Dore, Sales and Castro (2014), Fritsch (2017), among others. These surveys show the difficulty of institutions in offering conditions that meet the realities of working students, who find themselves in the contingency of dropping out of the course, because they cannot reconcile the requirements of the course with those of the job and need to make choices. On this issue, a technical pedagogical server, referring to the student worker and making a comparison with integrated high school students, expresses himself as follows:

> Pedagogical Technician 5 – As I have been more at night, I realize that this is an audience that is really left out. My perception seems that the focus is on integrated secondary education [...]. I am very sorry for this difference in the reception of these people.

In this sense, it is essential to discuss what is aimed at student workers, as there is a historical absence of an education project that meets the real needs of workers, as stated by Frigotto (2018, p. 46), for whom:

> [...] the Brazilian bourgeoisie never actually put forward the project of basic schooling and technical-professional

> training, as a social and subjective right, for the majority of workers and to prepare them for complex work, which would make it, as a class that owns capital, with conditions to compete with central capitalism.

This perception is shared by Fritsch, Vitelli and Rocha (2014), when they consider that no policy has contributed to change the reality of workers. According to these authors, in addition to the absence of policies, in general, the pedagogical practices adopted in educational institutions do not take into account the profile and social condition of students, which require educational practices that consider their socio-economic and cultural context.

To meet these subjects, Garcia and Lima Filho (2004, p. 30) defend an education that considers work as an educative principle, which enables "[…] humanization [and] socialization for participation in social life [together with] qualification process for work, through the appropriation and construction of knowledge and knowledges, science and culture, techniques and technology".

Thus, the importance of work as an educative principle, based on the principles of polytechnic, as the possibility of a human emancipatory education, which is, as stated by Kuenzer (2001), in essence, the best choice for the working class for meet, in part, their need to transform society. Thus, it is understood that defending work as an educative principle is pointing to a Professional and Technological Education that aims at human emancipation.

Access and Identification with the Course in Professional and Technological Education

Another reason for dropping out highlighted in the research participants' speeches, especially the teachers (67%), was the fact that students did not identify with the course or area of study they were attending.

The issue of students' identification with the courses takes on another perspective when it implies school dropout, as the subjectivity of the individual must be taken into account, since it is possible that motivations and interests undergo changes during a training course and, when realizing who does not identify with the course, the subject can go in search of something that suits him better.

In this sense, two issues drew attention in the speeches of some public agents. The first one attributes the non-identification with the course to the fact that it is free, and for this reason there is no appreciation of the student, who, due to any difficulty, abandons it. The second refers to the process of joining the IFSC, especially after the institutional decision to select students by public raffle, which allowed the entry of students who do not know the area of the course.

> Teacher 2 – There is also another factor, which I think I had not talked to you about, which is… we have already discussed it at some point… Well, as here we do not pay a monthly fee, it is free, the student thinks that, 'ah,

I I'll see what happens; If I like it, I stay, if I don't like it, I leave, because I didn't pay anything at all'.

Teacher 5 – After the raffle, we see that one characteristic is that it is not the course they want; they say 'I came here to see what it is'; 'I came to see which is the course', and sometimes it really isn't what they wanted.

In this regard, it is important to reinforce that article 206 of the Federal Constitution (Brazil, 1988) and article 3 of the Law of Guidelines and Base of National Education – LDB (Brazil, 1996), guarantee free public education as a right. In addition to being a right, gratuity is a social achievement. Therefore, in a society where discourses of commodification and financing of education are present, it is essential to strengthen and defend the Federal Institutes as public and free institutions.

The possibility of attending a public and free professional education increased with the process of expansion and internalization of the Federal Network, which made it possible to democratize access to different regions of Brazil, increasing, as a result, the absolute number of school dropouts, since, as Silva, Pelissari and Steimbach (2013) ponder, the expansion of professional and technological education did not set out to change its excluding structural essence. Under the discourse of "democratization", access to technical education was expanded in line with the demands of the market and development, without, however, problematizing central issues involving education, such as the adequacy of the curriculum, the visions and aspirations of students, school culture and public school management, aspects that are present in the speech of one manager participating in the research:

Manager 6 – From the moment I had a selection process where I selected (in quotation marks) more students to come to the 'campus', maybe the student saw a greater value… […] And then, from the moment that we expanded the universalization of access to education, we also brought the problem of society into the institution. And then I don't know if we were equally prepared to deal with this societal problem.

It is important to describe that some public agents defended that the admission process by public raffle did not change the dropout data and the profile of students in the courses surveyed:

Manager 5 – I am an extreme advocate of this raffle issue. Depending on the opinions that each one has, when we talk about the selection process, why would I select the best and the best to study in an institution that was made to serve a needier public? Which audience needs it most? […]. I show them. I take the averages there, I take the evasion and retention there and I show them that it doesn't [emphasize] change. It does not [emphasize] change. I have all the data there.

The issue of gratuity and the way in which students enter the IFSC ended up highlighting two elements that are present in the speeches of 58% of the teachers participating in the research, highlighting the interpretation that the student is an individual who is thinking only of himself and is also guilty of the process. They emphasize that they do

not value the institution and are not committed to their choices, being in many moments immediate and that they easily give up on their goals.

As highlighted by Dore, Araújo and Mendes (2014, p. 16), the discourse of a pedagogical solution that presents itself through a more rigid selection process, thus selecting "the most capable" and contemplating only those with academic merit, assumes a perspective nostalgic and conservative that blames new students for the drop in the quality of education. For the authors, it is necessary to build policies that guarantee the permanence and success of students, otherwise "[...] we will democratize access, but we will not democratize knowledge, something essential to break with the elitist, segregating and dualistic school culture" (Dore; Araújo; Mendes, 2014, p. 16).

The democratization of access, by allowing students with less cultural and social capital to enter Federal Institutes, threatens, in the view of most participants, the quality of a structure that reinforces meritocracy and has competitiveness as a reference to guarantee an education "strong and of quality", a slogan highlighted in many moments to refer to the federal public institutions of Professional and Technological Education.

Appropriating the term "excluding inclusion", coined by Kuenzer (2005) when reflecting on the role of the school in its relationship with the market, it is considered that the democratization of access for all, when it does not provide actions and reflections on the ways to ensure that those who access are successful and remain, performs an exclusionary inclusion. At the same time that it includes the subject, not looking at its exclusionary structure, it excludes him, even blaming him, at times, for his exclusion, which further reinforces the need for a real and transformative inclusion, which guarantees the permanence of students in courses with which they identify.

The Right to Permanence in Professional and Technological Education

As already presented, school permanence is a right guaranteed in article 206 of the 1988 Constitution and ratified in article 3 of the Law of Guidelines and Base of National Education – LDB. However, to comply with it, it is essential that there are mechanisms for this, that is, it is necessary to establish actions that allow conditions for students to remain and complete their studies.

In the Federal Network of Professional and Technological Education, one of the main actions to support school retention is student assistance, regulated by Decree No. 7,234 (Brazil, 2010), through the National Student Assistance Program (Programa Nacional de Assistência Estudantil - PNAES). This program consists of student assistance actions that are carried out by federal institutions of higher education and also by the Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology, due to their specificities.

At the IFSC, in compliance with the PNAES, student assistance was regulated by CEPE/IFSC Resolution No. 01, of November 30, 2010, with the objective, according to Article 2, of "[...] guaranteeing conditions of successful access and permanence of students in the formative path" (IFSC, 2010, p. 1). The student assistance actions and programs regulated in this Resolution include universal service and assistance to students in social vulnerability.

According to this resolution, the universal attendance of student assistance is intended for all students enrolled at the IFSC and developed through the following programs: Technical-Scientific Development Program; Health and Psychosocial Support Program; Academic Monitoring and Teaching Support Program; Culture, Art and Sport Program; Political-Academic Participation Incentive Program; Introduction to the World of Work Program; Student Food Program; Assistance Program for Students' Children, and Student Housing Program (IFSC, 2010).

Assistance to students in social vulnerability, in turn, is carried out by the Assistance Program for Students in Social Vulnerability (PAEVS), which, according to article 8 of the resolution, "[…] consists of offering aid, through financial benefit, to contribute to meeting the needs of students in social vulnerability, aiming at their permanence and academic success" (IFSC, 2010, p. 3).

When dialoguing with research participants about policies to support students' permanence, 97% of respondents recognized the contribution made by student assistance in this regard. However, although the IFSC regulations provide for universal programs, it was observed, in most speeches, an understanding that student assistance is restricted to a specific action aimed at assisting students in social vulnerability, which can be inferred from the highlight given to PAEVS as a motivator for students to stay, to the detriment of other programs, as inferred in some statements:

> Pedagogical Technician 5 – Many come here with very big financial difficulties, so sometimes the help they come to get from the PAEVS, which is the assistance program, is the motivator to continue.

> Teacher 9 – The PAEVS itself is a great motivator for permanence, for sure. Our region here is very poor, so there are many students who stay here because they receive the PAEVS, for sure.

Even so, according to data previously presented in Table 2, the PAEVS did not deserve much attention, having been evidenced in the speech of only 33% of the managers, 25% of the pedagogical and 8% of the teachers.

Daros (2016) criticizes student assistance focused on income transfer, as an action that reduces the multidisciplinary character of Student Assistance, limiting itself to the practice of policies that tend to transfer financial resources to users instead of providing adequate structures for the provision of social services to all students. A study carried out by the author on school leaving shows that the focus on the

scholarship granted, such as income transfer, is not enough to contain the main motivators of school leaving, mainly pointed out by the difficulty of reconciling study and work and by difficulties that involve the teaching-learning process, questions also mentioned by some of the research participants:

> Teacher 5 – The financial part is important, but I see more students dropping out for learning reasons than for financial reasons.

As an action to support school permanence, in the decree that provides for the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES) it is defined in article 5, sole paragraph, item II (Brazil, 2010), that federal institutions of higher education must establish mechanisms monitoring and evaluation of the program, including the PAEVS. However, Daros (2016) points out the absence of research and systematized instruments for monitoring and evaluating the PNAES, both institutionally and within the scope of SETEC/MEC, a perception shared by some managers, who pointed out the lack of a systematized evaluation of the PNAES in the institution, as well as other actions to support permanence.

> Manager 3 – [About PNAES] I don't know of any formal work that has been done. Including this is something of audit questioning, which we already had... We need this. It was pointed out that the IFSC has not carried out enough studies. We need to do a better study of how this is impacting.

It should be noted that, in a report on the assessment of PAEVS in 2016 (IFSC, 2016), there was no assessment of the effectiveness of the program for student permanence. The report showed that the student assistance policy has a prominent place in the institution when discussing the right to remain in school, however, it pointed out challenges in the institutionalization of universal programs and in the evaluations of student assistance.

One cannot fail to point out, however, the importance of the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES) as an advance in relation to the struggle for public policies aimed at supporting school retention. In particular, in the current political situation, intensified by cuts in education, the debate on the importance of this program and strengthening for its transformation into a public policy has become fundamental when seeking a public and quality Professional Education.

In addition to the PAEVS, other actions developed to support school permanence were indicated by the research participants. Among them they highlighted welcoming students; monitoring; the reduction of the weekly workload of the course, leaving some free time for the working student to have an evening or time to dedicate to other activities such as, for example, library studies; extra-class services offered by professors to carry out work or activities in laboratories; offering courses aimed at working on basic mathematics and/or leveling classes; the modification of the Pedagogical Project of the Course (PPC) aiming to include more practical disciplines in the workload; conducting study habits workshops; setting up and welcoming incoming students; the

class teacher, and the search and contact actions with students who dropped out of their courses.

In the dialogues about the actions, it was noted, however, the absence of an institutional proposal aimed at strengthening and monitoring actions to support permanence, which are organized individually or locally, often focused on courses or just on certain campuses.

It was also observed the absence of a dialogue between the campuses about the actions that should be carried out as a demonstration of a total look of the institution, that is, the reports of the agents evidenced punctual and often discontinuous actions and without follow-up of some courses or campuses:

> Manager 4 – Does a student who participates in the research have less chance of dropping out? Hypothesis: yes. This is supported by our experience, right? […] It's still just a matter of perception, but we need follow-up, registration and for each intervention like that there should be a follow-up so we know if it works or not.

The absence of evaluation makes it difficult to interpret the real reasons for dropping out and may even contribute to strengthening the belief that it is impossible to modify school dropout and reproduce issues that make dropout natural, such as, for example, that this is natural in exact sciences courses.

It is important to point out that all the actions mentioned by the interviewees show institutional or public agents' concern in terms of making it possible to stay in school. However, one cannot fail to show that these actions, in many moments, turned to making the student responsible, that is, it was the student who needed to use the spaces offered, seek monitoring, develop a study habit, not thus evidencing a rethinking of the school structure. This does not mean that the actions offered are not important, on the contrary, they demonstrate interest and institutional concern, but they highlight the need to reflect on the school structure.

Final Considerations

Looking at school dropout experienced by students of Professional and Technological Education implies, as pointed out by Fritsch (2017), visualizing the ills produced by a project of an excluding society based on capitalist principles, such as meritocracy, individualization, market education, the structural duality.

Education workers, in general, supported by their experiences, see the motivators of dropping out or staying as being generated by individual issues, provoked by the students themselves, or resulting from processes external to the educational institution in which they carry out their teaching, management or pedagogical monitoring activities.

Despite the concern about the subject, expressed by the public agents, the actions to support the permanence mentioned were fragmented, discontinuous and strengthened the individualization and

blame of their subjects, revealing the absence of factors aimed at modifying some of the structures of Professional and Technological Education. Corroborating this perception, the interviewees did not express concern with other issues regarding school permanence or dropout, such as pedagogical practices, curricular restructuring, the needs of their subjects, school culture, public school management, continuing education of workers, among others, that could influence the structure of the EPT, and that are central to an educational process.

It must be considered, however, that this is a historical construction and it is not intended to blame workers for strengthening exclusionary perspectives. The data only reinforce how much the mastery of these issues is veiled and intrinsic in everyday life, with the worker himself often reproducing it in his speech without much awareness, either as a result of their formation, or even by the reproduction of what constituted them historically and socially.

They also reinforce the need to consolidate a formation policy for professional education workers committed to human emancipatory education, and the importance of monitoring and analyzing the indices and motivators of student dropout and permanence, so that it is possible to develop and evaluate actions and policies to support school permanence.

In this sense, there are enormous social and educational challenges that need to be faced in order to break with the liberal reproductive logic and guarantee people's rights, including school permanence. This right is denied when dropping out and remaining in school are not discussed; when these issues are naturalized in the daily life of the school.

Translated by Sabrina Mendonça Ferreira and proofread by Nilson Marcos Dias Garcia

Notes

1 This article was based on the doctoral thesis entitled *School dropout and permanence in Professional and Technological Education: views of education workers at the Federal Institute of Santa Catarina* (Zanin, 2019), defended in November 2019 at the Postgraduate Program in Technology and Society (PPGTE) at Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná (UTFPR). The text was duly adapted for the composition of this article.

2 In this research, the term school dropout is used instead of exclusion or evasion, as it is considered that it better represents the relationship established between the various factors that involve the student and the school, resulting from social, economic and cultural processes, since the student can drop out or be dropped out. It should be noted, however, that other denominations may be found in the text when issued by the authors taken as reference.

3 The academic efficiency index is the ability of an institution to achieve the expected results in terms of certified students, or with potential for certification, in relation to the total number of enrollments considering a given cycle

of enrollments. For the calculation of "cycle evasion", however, only students who lost their connection with the institution before the completion of the course are considered, considering only enrollments linked to enrollment cycles scheduled to end in the year prior to the reference year (Moraes et al., 2018).

4 The Nilo Peçanha Platform, established by Ordinance No. 01 of the Ministry of Education (Brazil, 2018), is a virtual environment for the collection, validation and dissemination of official statistics from the Federal Network of Professional, Scientific and Technological Education. On this platform, data are found from the base year of 2017.

5 The Permanence and Success Groups are working groups (GT) with the objective to study and organize strategies for monitoring and overcoming school dropouts.

6 In the testimonies, we tried to respect the oral manifestation of each of the participants, doing, however, a textualization work in order to minimize eventual errors of agreement and semantics.

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