



## YOUTH, WORK AND SCHOOL IN RURAL SPACE

### JUVENTUDE, TRABALHO E ESCOLA NO ESPAÇO RURAL

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#### Abstract

Rural youth is conceived as a specific social category that takes shape in the face of diversity and heterogeneity. In this direction, this theoretical essay aims to discuss the condition of being young in rural areas from the relationship between work and study. It was constituted from a qualitative approach and produced through bibliographical research involving authors such as Bourdieu (2003), Dayrell (2003), Ferreira and Alves (2009), Margulis and Urresti (1996), Moraes, Pasqualli and Spessatto (2021). It was prepared from publications in books, periodicals that address the investigated theme. This manuscript portrays the young people's dilemma between staying in rural areas or migrating to the city and, in some cases, the pressure for family succession in the countryside. It also highlights the

differentiated conditions of access, permanence and school success among young people of different genders, given the expectations set by families. The search for studies in the urban area and, consequently, the abandonment of the field creates the expectation of improvement in living conditions, which, not always, materializes, if not for the advance in the levels of schooling.

#### Resumo

A juventude rural é concebida como uma categoria social específica que se configura diante da diversidade e da heterogeneidade. Nesta direção, este ensaio teórico tem como objetivo discorrer sobre a condição de ser jovem no espaço rural a partir das relações entre o trabalho e o estudo. Foi constituído a partir de uma abordagem qualitativa e produzido por meio de pesquisa bibliográfica envolvendo autores como Bourdieu (2003), Dayrell (2003), Ferreira e Alves (2009), Margulis e Urresti (1996), Moraes, Pasqualli e Spessatto (2021). Foi elaborado a partir de publicações em livros, periódicos que abordam a temática investigada. Esse manuscrito retrata o dilema dos jovens entre permanecer no meio rural ou migrar para a cidade e, em alguns casos, a pressão pela sucessão familiar no campo. Destaca, também, a condição diferenciada de acesso, permanência e êxito escolar entre os jovens de diferentes gêneros, dada as expectativas postas pelas famílias. A procura por estudos na área urbana e, conseqüentemente, o abandono do campo, cria a expectativa de melhoria na condição de vida, o que, nem sempre, se materializa, senão pelo avanço nos níveis de escolaridade.

#### INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is considered that youth is not just a word that classifies, by age, subjects who are neither old, adults nor children. Here, youth is seen as the result of a historical and social process, and although it has characteristics that seem common to all youth groups, the aim is to highlight the individualities of their

objective conditions of existence, as is the case for youth who inhabit rural areas.

Dayrell (2003, p. 40) highlights that “youth is, at the same time, a social condition and a type of representation”. The author opts for the concept of youth based on readings carried out in Peralva (1997), reporting the following:

If there is a universal character given by the transformations of the individual in a given age group, in which they complete their physical development and face psychological changes, the way in which each society, in a given historical time, and, within it, each group social media will deal with this moment and represent it. This diversity is achieved based on social (social classes), cultural (ethnicities, religious identities, values) and gender conditions, as well as geographic regions, among other aspects (DAYRELL, 2003, p. 41-42).

According to Margulis and Urresti (1996), youth is more than a word; it is a condition related to historical, social, economic and cultural construction in which a series of perspectives such as gender, age, generation, institutions and social classes overlap. According to Ariès (2011), it is not restricted to a definition marked by biological development or psychological maturation and can be thought of as an idealization of a subject constructed in modernity. Therefore, when we mention the word youth, a series of images about it appear in our memory that interfere with our way of understanding young people.

For Dayrell (2003), youth, in terms of common sense, is riddled with socially constructed images. Bourdieu (2003) advocates that “the sociologist's

professional reflex is to remember that the divisions between ages are arbitrary” and that “the border between youth and old age is in all societies a stop in a fighting game” (BOURDIEU, 2003, p 151). Youth is, then, a broad issue that cannot have a single meaning; that is, it cannot be deciphered in a single word.

Franzoi (2011) highlights that it is impossible to talk about young people and work without mentioning school, as it is the place where young people need to be and which they should never have left. Work should also be present naturally at school. According to Kuhn and Brumes (2016), school and education are very important for young people, as they offer means of accessing a better future and overcoming existing conditions, which is strongly supported by parents, having as they want a better life for their children. Therefore, school is highly valued by rural youth, especially young men.

Therefore, this study aims to discuss youth in rural areas, with the central theme being the relationship between youth and work and school. To achieve its objective, the text is structured into three sections. In the first, named initial considerations, presented here, light is shed on the theme investigated, with a focus on indicating the objective and the methodological process used to prepare this theoretical essay. In the second, named the theoretical foundation, the privileged theoretical discussion is presented, giving shape to the proposed theoretical essay focusing on discussions about rural youth, work and school. The third section brings the final considerations, and finally, the theoretical references brought to this discussion are presented.

This work follows the principles of the qualitative approach, which, for André (1995, p. 17), “observes the fact in the natural environment”. According to Gerhardt and Silveira (2009, p. 34), when using this methodological perspective, we seek to “[...]”

explain why things happen, expressing what should be done, but do not qualify the values and symbolic exchanges and they are not even submitted to the test of facts, as the data analyzed are nonmetric (elicited and interactional)”.  
 Qualitative research answers very particular questions. In the social sciences, it is concerned with a level of reality that cannot be quantified; that is, it works with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes, which corresponds to a deeper space of relationships of processes and phenomena that cannot be reduced to the operationalization of variables. (MINAYO, 2002, p.21-22).

For Prodanov and Freitas (2023), bibliographical research, the source of information for this study is:

[...] prepared from already published material, consisting mainly of books, magazines, publications in periodicals and scientific articles, newspapers, bulletins, monographs, dissertations, theses, cartographic material, internet, with the aim of placing the researcher in direct contact with all

material already written on the subject of research. In bibliographical research, it is important that the researcher checks the veracity of the data obtained, observing possible inconsistencies or contradictions that the works may present (PRODANOV; FREITAS, 2013, p. 54).

The present study is framed as a theoretical essay and, in this sense, does not use empirical research as a database. It is based on a bibliographical review based on the search for the descriptors 'rural youth', 'work', 'education' and 'school' in books, scientific articles published in magazines, thesis and dissertation portals and documents that do not undergo analysis. Next, the theoretical body of analysis and discussion of the proposed essay is presented.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

### **Rural youth**

Rural youth is conceived as a specific social category that is configured in the face of diversity and heterogeneity. This arises from the fact that it is not just 'being' in a rural space and placing oneself in a chronological age bracket that clearly defines what it means to be a rural young person. According to Ferreira and Alves (2009), the fact that young people are linked to agriculture does not make them farmers and, therefore, the process of categorization, or even concern for rural youth, manifests itself, as Castro (2007) points out, in the problem of young people leaving rural areas.

Brazil is home to almost 50 million people aged between 15 and 29 years (¼ of the population), which can be called a “demographic bonus” (ATA DA JUVENTUDE, 2021). According to the last demographic census, carried out in 2010, there were 7.8 million young people aged 15 to 29 living in rural areas in Brazil, representing only 15.6% of the young population. This is a very heterogeneous audience that is still little analyzed in academic research. This quantification corresponds to the age range of 15 to 24 years, which, according to Law No. 12,852/2013, which established the Youth Statute, characterizes the age of Brazilian youth. (BRAZIL 2013). Regarding the Youth Statute, for Moraes, Pasqualli and Spessatto (2021, p. 4), it is

The result of debates and broad discussions in spaces of social participation, [...] it is a milestone in guaranteeing generational rights in the country, together with the Statute of Children and Adolescents and the Statute of the Elderly, giving a new direction to policies for youth and consolidating the category as a constituent of subjects of rights. It is important to remember that the concept of youth was attributed, in the first social programs, to young people at risk who depended on government actions to be reintroduced into society.

However, it is usual, in regard to rural youth, to include individuals aged 15 to 29 in this time frame,

considered in accordance with the National Youth Policy in 3 groups: a) young adolescents, aged 15 to 17; b) young people, aged 18 to 24; c) young adults, aged 25 to 29. For Silva and Silva (2011, p. 664), “considering this division, it can be seen that the first group is already included in the current child and adolescent policy; however, the other two are not.” Thus, the thesis of the importance of public policies is reinforced, especially for the groups in which the subjects are included. According to Troian and Breitenbach (2018, p. 789).

Considered a stage of life in which one is not a child but also not recognized as an adult, youth highlights a moment of transition for the subject and whose characterization presents different points of view, often characterizing it as an imprecise moment.

In this sense, there is a whole differentiation in the experiences arising from situations linked to schooling, the world of work and the family, reflexively meaning differently in each of these sets (MARTINS, 2019). According to Ferreira and Alves (2009), in rural areas, the transition from youth to adulthood is characterized by the composition of a new productive unit carried out through marriage, given that cases in which a young person has a property are rare. productive and live there single, alone. In a cultural and traditional condition, he understands that he needs a wife, as she will be fundamental in the social division of labor in rural areas and is associated with nouns and adjectives such as “vanguard”, “transformer”, and “questioner” (TROIAN; BREITENBACH, 2018, pp. 789-790).

Castro (2005) and Brumer (2007) emphasize that there are two recurring idealizations about rural youth. One is associated with the problem of young people's tendency to migrate to the city, which, for Castro (2005), contributes to the invisibility of the category as a builder of social identities. The second deals with the characteristics or problems that exist in the transfer of the family agricultural establishment to the new generation. According to Golgher (2010), the departure of this young person implies the understanding that the place of departure offers lower living conditions than the place of destination. No one migrates if they do not envisage a tacit improvement in life in the place where they will live. Changing for the worse is not part of the decision-making process, even though projections do not always materialize as planned. Carneiro (1998) highlights that “rural youth stands out as the demographic group that is most dramatically affected by this dynamic of diluting the boundaries between rural and urban spaces, combined with the worsening situation of lack of perspectives for who live from agriculture” (CARNEIRO, 1998, p. 1).

Rural young people are those who not only live in rural areas but also who experience and participate in the family-based productive unit, in which they occupy culturally defined spaces. It is the subject who relates to a specific way of being, linked to a reality in which the world of work and the world of life are reconciled. This young man is an articulator of life practices like any other, although he maintains the identity characteristics that express the particularities of his way of life. According to Weisheimer (2005), rural youth are identified in 14 different ways in studies: rural students, young people, young farmers, young people from the countryside, young people from the interior, young people from the backlands, young rural entrepreneurs, young rural entrepreneurs, young children of farmers,

rural riverside youth, landless youth, youth in rural settlements, and rural school youth.

A striking element in rural education is its intersection with rural social movements and organized rural youth, which simultaneously emerges as a priority audience for education and as one of the creators of the rural education proposal. This is because unlike rural education, whose concern is the training of labor to work in the market, rural education is concerned with the training of farmers, rural leaders with conditions to develop socioprofessionally and, at the same time, take charge of social processes that occur at the local level (MARTINS, 2019, p. 59).

According to Wanderley (2007), it is in the family that rural young people have the space to live, work, experience and survive; in other words, it is an affective community. Marim (2020) states that in addition to the family sphere, there is the socioeconomic sphere, which is marked by different possibilities and limitations. Young people seek to incorporate certain technological resources, as communication technologies also interfere in the socialization of rural youth, providing bond institutions to ensure their positive integration into society and build social autonomy. Thus, rural youth are linked to rural work and family farming. It is a process of interaction and transmission of knowledge that has

circulated in these families/communities since time immemorial (MARTINS, 2019, p. 161). In addition to this knowledge, young people seek to study, reconciling work and studies. In the subsequent section, we will delve deeper into the relationship between work and school, as rural youth do to reconcile them.

### **Work x School**

Studies by Kuhn and Brumes (2016) show that, in relation to work in the family unit, there is a division in the activities carried out by young people, as boys work more in activities focused on agriculture and girls in domestic service. Thus, it is notable that young people, as they work more effectively in agricultural work with their parents, can also have a say in decision-making within the property, which is no longer possible for young women, and the work carried out by them is only considered an aid.

According to Stropassolas (2002), life in the countryside is more attractive for boys than for girls, as they inherit the land or have support to carry out productive activities, being able to develop life projects that are valid alternatives in relation to migration to the city. However, for girls, there is usually a life as a farmer's wife, which is no longer a unanimous desire.

Weisheimer (2007) highlights that parents transmit the knowledge inherent to agricultural activities and succession to their sons, while women are reserved for light activities and domestic work, in addition to being encouraged to study. In this context, the sexual division of labor, a structuring element of patriarchal gender regimes, produces patterns of conduct that are structured in a binary and sexual order that not only differentiates but also hierarchizes work according to the sex/gender system. According to Heredia (1979), the definition of what is work and what is not work in the field goes beyond a simple division

of tasks but is structured based on the opposition between home and farmland.

Work, for Antunes (1999), is in accordance with Marxian thought and is something inherent to humanity, in the sense that it is through work that man transforms the environment and is also transformed by it, creating needs and being transformed by these needs. Thus, work is a fundamental activity of human life, in addition to practice and/or meeting marketing needs, as humanity is constituted in its activities and is transformed by them. It is in this meaning of work that the constitution of the social being becomes possible, “protoform of human activity, basic foundation of human omnilaterality” (ANTUNES, 1999, p. 85).

From this perspective, work is understood as the agent of social transformation. Therefore, work represents the transformation of nature through human action. Moreover, it is responsible for human construction, as Engels reflects:

Work is the source of all wealth, economists say. Thus, in effect, alongside nature, it is in charge of providing the materials that it converts into wealth. The work, however, is much more than that. It is the basic and fundamental condition of all human life. In addition, to such a degree that, to a certain extent, we can say that work created man himself (ENGELS, 2004, p. 269).

Since work is an agent of fundamental transformation for men, it is important to point out the importance of school for young people, as there is an enormous difference in the education offered in rural

schools compared to urban school education. Ferreira and Alves (2009) highlight that schooling influences the prospects for the reproduction of agricultural activity, as it brings rural young people closer to a universe particularly focused on the urban environment and the activities and expectations of everyday life in cities. It is clear that the values superimposed on the school and its ideology, in general, are urban, as the education offered in urban centers rarely privileges and values rural reality.

According to the authors Ferreira and Alves (2009), rural education demonstrates many deficiencies in structure, materials and equipment. For Martins and Carrano (2011), school, as an institution, can also help young people make conscious choices about their personal trajectories, developing values, knowledge and skills, no longer transmitted by families today, given the social changes that have occurred.

To a certain extent, rural young people find themselves labeled in the face of the rapprochement between the rural and urban worlds. This arises from the fact that the urban analysis center is superior in value. To appear or be rural is to be different from the social standard. Castro (2007) notes that one of the problems affecting rural areas is “the lack of access to services and consumer goods”, as well as the lack of effective and efficient public policies in general (CASTRO, 2007, p. 129). According to Weisheimer (2005), what leads young people to migrate is the lack of opportunities for work and income generation, thus preventing the reproduction of productive units.

These young people migrate because they want better working conditions and higher pay but also better quality education and, no less important, access to leisure. These young people demand cinema, shows, theater, travel, etc. However, their material conditions, when migrating to the city, are so precarious that they would hardly be able to fulfill these desires, except for the advancement of training processes. However, it is

important to note that they have these desires, albeit to a very high degree of idealization. With this, we notice an interesting dynamic: rural young people are no longer accepting the role that has always been imposed on them, of being a family helper.

According to Kuhn and Brumes (2016), the daily mobility of rural young people between the countryside and the city also allows them to come into contact with the urban universe when they also structure their representations of the city. Two trends are observed here: while a good portion (41.18%) of these young people intend to stay in the countryside, as they see the city in its negativity, that is, as a space of violence, where time is fast and controlled. For others, they see the city as fundamental to their future project, seeing it as a space of opportunity for study, leisure and employment, characteristics that they cannot find in the countryside.

The low level of education that persists among rural populations may be related to unequal conditions of insertion into the world of work, which is still premature and marked by few formal employment opportunities, even in a scenario of productive expansion in agriculture. Therefore, leaving the countryside still constitutes one of the ways to obtain better professional and educational opportunities, which creates dilemmas for rural youth today (Castro, 2009). Those who remain in the countryside continue to

have low educational levels and subsist through less paid work, which may imply little possibility of reversing the exclusion situation. Furthermore, the type of employment, whether in more formal jobs with a higher level of qualification and associated rights, is a factor to consider in understanding schooling among young people (SANTOS, 2017, p. 619).

Prolonged schooling and technical or higher-level diplomas are perceived by rural young people, especially by rural young women, as faster and safer paths to personal autonomy and social ascent (MARIM, 2020, p. 41). When these young people acquire greater knowledge, they will be able to use it within family properties, thus improving production and marketing techniques and adapting daily activities.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Rural youth have gender differences in several aspects, just as their future projects differ. However, it is clear that this social category has a diversity that deserves to be widely studied so that public policies can be developed that meet the demands of rural youth, with improvements in equipment, structures, and materials, enabling these young people to attend a school that satisfies their needs. In other words, they want changes in the field and in the Brazilian reality.

In this movement to study, many young people move to the city in search of studies. They see school as a life-changing possibility, believing that, by moving to the city, they will be able to study and get a job in the

urban space. In this context, ensuring access, permanence and success in basic education for these young people, providing them with an increase in their secondary education and equality to compete in the world of work becomes an obligation and duty of the public authorities.

Finally, public educational policies must actually reach young people who live in rural areas. An education that ensures good training so that, in addition to remaining in school, they can have quality teaching. All this to provide conditions to develop her activities, expanding production with new technologies so that she can live with her family in the countryside with quality of life and sustainability.

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