

**REVIEW: WHICH HIGH SCHOOL?**

**RESENHA: QUE ENSINO MÉDIO?**

**REVISIÓN: ¿QUÉ ESCUELA SECUNDARIA?**



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| 1



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**ABSTRACT:** Review whether, in this text, the book "High school reforms in: work, politics, quotidian" by Jean Mac Cole Tavares Santos, Maria Nogueira Elione Rosemeire Diogenes and Reis (2012). The critical reading of this work resulted in a synthesis effort that has its materialization in this text. Concerns, objects and prospects of the authors are in constant dialogue throughout the book and the dialogue is exactly the responsibility for coping with issues dear to the issues surrounding the historical Brazilian high school in their interface with public policy.

**KEYWORDS:** High School. Book. Synthesis.

**RESUMO:** *Resenha-se neste texto o livro Ensino médio em reformas: trabalho, políticas, cotidiano, de Jean Mac Cole Tavares Santos, Elione Maria Nogueira Diógenes e Rosemeire Reis (2012). A leitura crítica desta obra resultou em um esforço de síntese que tem sua materialização neste texto. As preocupações, os objetos e as perspectivas dos autores se encontram em constante diálogo ao longo do livro e é exatamente este diálogo o responsável pelo enfrentamento de questões caras às históricas problemáticas em torno do ensino médio brasileiro em suas interfaces com as políticas públicas.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Ensino médio. Livro. Síntese.*

**RESUMEN:** *Este texto reseña el libro Ensino médio em reformas: trabalho, políticas, cotidiano, de Jean Mac Cole Tavares Santos, Elione Maria Nogueira Diógenes y Rosemeire Reis (2012). La lectura crítica de esta obra dio lugar a un esfuerzo de síntesis que tiene su materialización en este texto. Las preocupaciones, los objetos y las perspectivas de los autores están en constante diálogo a lo largo del libro y es justamente este diálogo el que se encarga de abordar temas caros a la problemática histórica en torno a la escuela secundaria brasileña en sus interfaces con las políticas públicas.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Escuela secundaria. Libro. Síntesis.*

The problem surrounding the identity of the Brazilian secondary school can be thought of from a data linked to the many reforms that this level of current basic education suffered between the second half of the eighteenth century and the last decade of the twentieth century: there were 21 different reforms (ANDRADE, 2012). What does this reformist character reveal of the projects in dispute for the schooling of young Brazilians? What high school does Brazil have today? What are its purposes? What are your relationships with higher education and the world of work? These are issues that emerge when we propose to reflect on education in a capitalist society, and this is exactly what happened at the *1st National High School Seminar (SENACEM)*, held in Mossoró/RN, in 2011.

This seminar brought together students, teachers, managers and researchers from education colleges and research groups from Rio Grande do Norte, Alagoas, Paraíba and Ceará,

concerned with discussing the government policies of the Ministry of Education for high school and the materiality of these in Brazilian schools. This event ended, among other things, by strengthening the intellectual ties between Jean Mac Cole Tavares Santos, Elione Maria Nogueira Diogenes and Rosemeire Reis – initial milestone in the preparation of the book reviewed here, *High School in reforms: work, policies, daily life*.

Launched a year after the seminar in question, this book condenses the sum of the authors' efforts to glimpse the reality of national high school, from the specificities of the discussions of their doctoral theses.

Jean Mac Cole, PhD in Education from the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), with sandwich period at the University of Valencia, in 2007, defended the thesis, *High school in the interior of Ceará under the impacts of the reform: between the official discourse of the new world of work and the appropriations/resistances by the school (1995 to 2005)*, available in (SANTOS, 2007).

Elione Diogenes, in turn, held his Doctorate in Public Policy at the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA), having obtained the degree in 2010, with the thesis, *A political evaluation and the process of implementation of the reform of high school in Ceará* (DIOGENES, 2010). And Rosemeire Reis, in 2006, completed her Doctorate in Education at the University of São Paulo (USP), with the thesis, *Meetings and mismatches: the relationship of young/high school students with school knowledge* (REIS, 2006)<sup>1</sup>.

The different views on high school – consolidated by these three doctoral investigations – are certainly the richest element of the work. The demarcation of the debate that the book raises is evident already in the introduction, because the authors make a point of pointing out the bias by which they observe reformist policies for high school: from the increasingly adaptive character to the interests of transnational capital. Thus, we can better understand the very dynamics of the text, which promotes direct relations between the categories condensed in its subtitle "work, policies and daily life" – necessarily in this order.

It is these categories that give movement to the book, since they summarize the two parts that compose it, that is: 1) Centrality of work, employment crisis and productive restructuring: elements to understand educational reforms; and 2) Educational reforms: from the new to the integrated high school.

The first part of the book is marked by a theoretical approach to work. In this case,

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<sup>1</sup> The information regarding the authors Santos, Diogenes and Reis was extracted from the authors' lattes curricula. Available in: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/4363681764477044>. Access: 03 Feb. 2022; Available in: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/2352567866641388>; <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3449113858899262>. Access: 03 Feb. 2022.

historical-dialectical materialism is used to discuss the centrality of work in the context of globalization and its consequences for education. The authors have a real confrontation between the theses that advocate the end of work and the Marxist conception of this category. With special attention, the writings of Paul Lafargue (1999), Raoul Vaneigem (1967), André Gorz (1987) and Robert Kurz (1993) are taken, in a very interesting exercise of approximation and distance between their perspectives. For authors:

There is in common, between Lafargue, Vaneigem, Gorz and Kurz, the perception that work dominates human life – such as torture, as suffering, as a god or as a deceased – all want to overcome it or already believe in its overcoming (SANTOS; DIOGENES; REIS, 2012, p. 30, our translation).

This argument, common to such postulators of the end of work, is taken in this book now reviewed as a starting point for an empirical counterpoint (which goes from common sense to the ontology of the social being), which seeks to show the place of work in people's lives.

In this sense,

[...] in the heads and mouths, the work is, in fact, an intrinsic part of the overwhelming life of most people: as presence, as absence-seeking, as torpor, as desire, as fatigue, as illusion - WORK - there it is! (SANTOS; DIOGENES; REIS, 2012, p. 42, our translation).

| 4

And yet

Extend your eyes forward. Make yourself contrary movement. Look at each other. Stand up and look up at the sky. Lower yourself now the same look. What do you see? Cities. Goods. Wares. Buildings. Human hand in action. Human body in transforming exercise. Human mind ready. Human action. Human reaction. Human performance. Everything is work! (SANTOS; DIOGENES; REIS, 2012, p. 61, our translation).

The authors affirm that, even technological transformations, new forms of work, flexibilization, recent roles of the State and all the current meanings and changes in the world of work that we have followed in recent decades, do not lead to the end of work. This would just be an impression, nothing more. A false perception, or rather, another shift of social forces.

In bringing this discussion to a broader scenario, the first part of the book is dedicated to dealing with two more important issues, namely: the relationship between Neoliberalism, productive restructuring and the crisis of capitalism in the world and in Brazil; and the links between work and vocational education.

The implementation of the neoliberal project occurred in different ways in the central and peripheral countries. The authors of the book are concerned to observe how this project

began to dictate the program to be implemented in Brazil from the 1990s – even if late, compared to other surrounding capitalist realities.

It is clear that this discussion is responsible, with regard to the whole of the book, for explaining the meanings that the work-education relationship begins to receive in contemporaneity, felt these imposed by the neoliberal perspective, guided by a relentless "[...] race for efficiency, for total quality, for lean production and, to a lesser extent, for computerization and robotics" (SANTOS; DIOGENES; REIS, 2012, p. 57, our translation).

The tips of this part of the book are tied precisely by the unfolding of the debates already placed in the field of education, with special attention to professional qualification. The work is perceived, therefore, by the authors of the book – in a very poetic way, I would venture to say – as a social construction, a true *historical building*.

And, from this perception, the work form of capitalism gains prominence in the criticism of Fordist pedagogy – greatly fueled by the contributions of Antonio Gramsci (2001), with the *text Americanism and Fordism*. The dual character of the Fordist school, as the authors point out, predicted, on the one hand, the mechanical preparation of manual workers and, on the other, the training of intellectual workers (SAVIANI, 2005; GIROUX, 1997; GÓMEZ, 2001). What is the relationship between this educational perspective and professional training in Toyotism? Thinking about this issue, the authors Santos, Diogenes and Reis (2012, p. 82, our translation) clarify that "[...] this type of school did not face the new demands for the new way of organizing production in post-Fordism capitalism".

The Japanese model, therefore, presents a discursive euphemism – filled with *terms such as flexibility, versatility and participatory autonomy* – that leads to the adoption of qualification policies concerned with the model of skills and competences. The commodification and financialization of economic and social relations have as expression, in education, the hegemonic discourse of employability, which condenses in itself, the individual culpability of unemployed and non-employable subjects.

Keeping the appropriate distinctions between education in each of these productive paradigms – Fordism and Toyotism – the writings of the end of this part of the book seek to demonstrate the subordination of professional training to the process of accumulation of capital in the scenario of real crisis of capitalism.

In the second part of the book, called *Educational Reforms: from the new to the integrated High School*, the debates built around the educational reforms for high school and the materiality of these in the school routine gain prominence. The authors elected as the starting point for the discussion about high school reforms, the process of insertion of Brazil in the

sociometabolic system of capitalism and its consequences for understanding the educational field. Corporate hegemonic thinking and "[...] the molding subordinated to the economic development standards of the advanced countries" (SANTOS; DIOGENES; REIS, 2012, p. 109, our translation), apparently old, still dictate the "neocolonialists" relations between national education and the so-called "multilateral" international prescriptions. Such relationships enable us to understand the rationality that sustains the state's action with regard to the educational issue, in general, and to high school, in a more specific way.

The reform of high school is observed by the authors from various aspects and subjects that contributed to its conception and execution, such as: the participation of international organizations; the influence of the market and entrepreneurs (through the National Business Bases Thinking - PNBE); the involvement of the third sector, as well as communication systems (television networks and print magazines); in addition to the participation of associations of education researchers, trade unions representing the professionals themselves in the area and, of course, the three spheres of power (legislative, executive and judicial) (SANTOS; DIOGENES; REIS, 2012).

The analysis carried out in this part of the book seeks to cover from the normative issues – and for this it uses the documents of the reform itself investigated, such as CNE/CEB Opinion No. 15/98, as well as the Federal Constitution of 1988 and the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education of 1996 – to the meaning of the reform in question. Jean Mac Cole, Elione Diogenes and Rosemeire Reis therefore take a close look at the historical and social path of this reform, ratifying the subordination of Brazilian public high school to the mold of transnational capitalism.<sup>2</sup>

The relationship between reform and the dictates of capital gains relevance in this discussion through a debate that the authors assume about the struggles of classes and societal projects around this object. The discrepancies between the promises of the high school reform discourse and the reality of young people in our public schools are problematized based on three main arguments, namely: the duality of the Brazilian school; the naturalization of the hegemonic; and the limits and impossibilities of achieving this reform. In view of these elements, the authors also defend an integral or omnilateral formation, which would be able to break with the capitalist society itself.

Finally, with a topic entitled "Dimensions of school experience for young people/high school students", we perceive the need of these researchers to understand the views of the young

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<sup>2</sup> Available in: [http://portal.mec.gov.br/cne/arquivos/pdf/1998/pceb015\\_98.pdf](http://portal.mec.gov.br/cne/arquivos/pdf/1998/pceb015_98.pdf). Access: 03 Feb. 2022.

people themselves about the school institution after this high school reform. Some data from Rosemeire Reis's doctoral thesis are brought in this part of the book to illustrate the discussion around the representations of young people about the elements that surround their daily lives at school – one clearly perceives the attempt to apprehend the ways in which young people relate to other subjects, with their own school and with knowledge.

This last discussion of the book contemplates a debate about the democratization of high school in Brazil and the consequent entry of "new students" in school, followed by problematizations about the very identity of high school in relation to the educational and society project that this stage concretizes: what is the role of high school, after all? Social contradictions then gain new reinforcement in the face of the democratization already mentioned.

Young people from the youth classes enter the secondary level of education and, in their speeches, bring with them the hopes of entire families: they are fathers, mothers, brothers and other relatives striving, as much as they can, to provide a "brief moratorium" to these young people, in order to delay their entry into the precarious world of the work that awaits them as much as possible. In this sense, "[...] the school experience in high school for these young people is rich in challenges of sociability, in significant encounters with different ways of relating to people" (SANTOS; DIÓGENES; REIS, 2012, p. 197, our translation).

The intellectual partnership expressed in these writings of the book is a very interesting exercise: it is a sum of readings; of a resumption of original works (theses) in the face of new questions that arise each day for the objects of each of the authors; and also, a cross of perspectives that eventually gave movement to these works, in a search for coherence to look at high school, from the conception that governs it to its daily life in Brazilian public schools.

Let us observe here the words of Francisco Ari de Andrade (2012, p. 9, our translation), in the preface the book:

This reading tends to bother some, because it is not passive. It's latent. They want the authors not only to draw attention to the incongruities of educational policies and programs focused on middle education in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, but to stimulate a national debate based on the intention of tracing the identity of the Brazilian secondary school, in view of the niches of market society that heat euphoria of dominant segments. It stimulates a critical reflection not on what has been done, but mainly about what has been left to be done and how it should be done to fill gaps in the national education system.

As a reader, I can finally say that this is one of those books in which everything is griffin: historical information; dense and critical analyses; footnotes, always full of indications of other

important works; and the authors' own positions in relation to the contexts they looked at.

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