

Uberization of work: a new phenomenon among schoolteachers in São Paulo State, Brazil?

Uberização do trabalho: um fenômeno de tipo novo entre os docentes de São Paulo, Brasil?

Uberización del trabajo: ¿un nuevo tipo de fenómeno entre los docentes de São Paulo, Brasil?

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Abstract

This essay aims to problematize and discuss the degree to which uberization of work can actually be characterized as a new phenomenon. The study is based on qualitative research and document analysis concerning hiring formats for teachers from 1999 to 2017. The article reconstructs the historical process of labor relations under the São Paulo state government, Brazil, marked by intentional flexibilization and oriented by the intrinsic principles of New Public Management. Beyond the digital economy, Uber has propagated even more flexible methods than those seen after industrial restructuring, promoting and featuring workers without contracts, the intensification of work, and minimal earnings. The parallel with teaching revisits the historical roots of precarious labor relations with teachers and shows that such characteristics are not a new phenomenon for the teaching profession. The study shows similar characteristics to those practiced by Uber and concludes that there is a process of quasi-uberization of teaching. The study also identifies strong signs of the dismantling of teachers' collective representation, since the profession is divided into three groups. Each group shows specific characteristics that accentuate the nuances in the individualization of work, a strategy coupled with managerialism and the observation that neoliberalism affects individuals, altering values and subjectivities, extolling competition and individualism in work processes.

Working Conditions; Teachers; Management; Public Sector

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Introduction

The current article aims to debate the labor relations with teachers in the São Paulo state school system, Brazil, and to problematize the degree to which uberization of their work is actually a new phenomenon. The underlying hypothesis is that a process of acute precarization is under way in the São Paulo public sector, similar to the characteristics of the transportation network company Uber Technologies Inc.

The article's historical approach aims to provide analytical elements to the configurations of teaching, based on teachers' labor relations and working conditions in the São Paulo state school system, whose policy has been oriented by economic rationality measures consistent with the adoption of New Public Management (NPM).

The article's ideas are the result of two qualitative studies focused basically on the object of analysis via the perceptions of the social actors involved in the phenomenon. These studies were launched in 2010 and share common and complementary aspects: the time frame, beginning in 1995 with Brazil's Educational Reform at the federal level and the adoption of NPM; their geographic scope, namely the state of São Paulo; the hiring formats for teachers working in Elementary level II and Middle level (stable and non-stable contracts); and labor relations and working conditions.

These two qualitative studies were concluded and included 48 interviews with teachers in the state capital and interior (the cities of Piracicaba, Estiva Gerbi, Campinas, Hortolândia, and Bauru), in order to determine whether the more precarious labor relations were associated with the cities' population size and/or with local and/or regional socioeconomic development. The interviews also considered the generational and gender perspectives. Two other studies (complementing the two previous ones) are currently underway and focus on an analysis of the phenomenon of work uberization and a comparison of Brazil and France in relation to the application of NPM in their respective and distinct historical contexts. A new phase of the research was launched recently in its application to changes in hiring formats in the public sector.

The document research centered on the legal frameworks informing educational policy, on the assumption that official documents hide meanings that require deciphering. We also built a historical series of statistical data on formats for hiring teachers, beginning with 1999 (the year in which the São Paulo State Department of Education – SEE-SP, began to make these data available) until the present.

The article is organized in two parts. We begin by discussing the history of the hiring formats in SEE-SP and the possible relationship to the uberization wave, as well as their inclusion in the classical forms of work organization and in the dyad aggregation-dissolution of collective labor representation. The hiring formats are associated with a constant investigation into new types of work contracts and related labor rights. Next, we identify three groups of teachers in the São Paulo state system, whose perceptions of the profession and public education portray the dynamics of resistance and discouragement, addressing questions directly related to the meanings of teaching work, with spinoffs in the profession's political organization.

Labor relations in the São Paulo State Government

An analysis of the legislation depicts the history of flexibilization of labor relations by the São Paulo State Government. For the analysis, we opted to address the periods according to the dates of the Rulings and Resolutions that altered the hiring formats for schoolteachers in the state.

Law n. 81 of April 2, 1887¹, enacted by then-president of the Province of São Paulo, the Baron of Parnahyba, indicated in Article 18 that teachers were named based on public admissions tests conducted by the Superior School Board, with lifetime tenure granted after three years of teaching experience and with a monthly salary of one hundred thousand réis. Article 23 essentially authorized a type of hiring that was an exception to the general rule of public admissions: *“Except for the case of the exam and approval by the Superior Board, the current non-tenured teachers are dispensed from their chairs four years after publication of the current law, and the chairs are declared vacant”* (our emphasis).

Meanwhile, legally, there was some protection in place for some aspects of teachers' autonomy, since the law provided that they should follow the teaching program but that they were not required to teach subjects in which they had not been trained.

The hiring process for teachers in São Paulo indicates the flexibilization of labor relations in the state school system. The system includes precarious contracts, according to the concept formulated by Castel ², with a rereading by Linhart ³, characterized by temporary work, part-time work, work unprotected by labor rights, and a series of other forms suggesting the vulnerability of employment contracts and leading to the precarization of living conditions given the prevailing job instability.

In São Paulo, the phenomenon acquired even more explicit plasticity with *Decree n. 49.532/1968* of April 26, 1968 ⁴, issued by the state government, which regulates hiring of teachers for excess classes in the state school system via the Consolidated Labor Legislation (CLT). The decree set twelve priorities for teachers' admissions, ranging from the teachers in charge of the respective subjects in the same school to lay teachers registered for related subjects and undergraduate students from the College of Philosophy, Science, and Letters of the São Paulo University.

This perspective prevailed over the years: on January 27, 1972, a *Ruling by the Division of Basic Education and Teacher Training* ⁵ included standards for admitting teachers for excess classes. In addition to the absence of a public admissions contest (thus failing to comply with standard procedures), the ruling provided for hiring third- and fourth-year undergraduate students from teacher training colleges. *Ruling DRHU 6* of September 15, 1989 ⁶, which rules on applications for teaching positions, provided for the inclusion of undergraduate seniors from teacher certification courses. This situation prevailed until 1999, when a new Ruling was issued.

The document analysis thus revealed a recurrent history of flexible hiring formats in the public sector.

Nevertheless, the current article features Brazil's economic and political context in the 1990s, at the height of productive restructuring in the private sector, with strong adherence to microelectronics, eliminating jobs and positions and leading to high unemployment rates ^{7,8}.

The Fordist period was marked by the strong presence of workers' collectives in factories, with homogeneous working conditions and work contracts, job stability, the development of professional careers in the same company, the addition of supplementary rights to the CLT for the more politically combative professions, and growth of the labor union movement. From the capitalist perspective, the rigidity of this organization's labor relations failed to meet the demands of a more dynamic society and was replaced in the name of a more flexible society, proclaiming the discourse of modernity. In this scenario, other forms of hiring such as outsourcing serve as an epilogue to Fordist culture in various senses.

Our investigation refers to adherence by the state government to private logic, accelerating hiring processes without public admissions and undergraduate student teachers. *Ruling DRHU 12/1999* ⁹ illustrates the problem, since Article 9, item III, provides for the admission of temporary teachers among undergraduate students "who have attended at least one semester in complete teacher training on the subject of the classes to be assigned to them".

This authorization consolidated a school system in the state of São Paulo in 1999 that consisted mostly of non-stable teachers: 72% of all the state's schoolteachers had precarious contracts with the SEE-SP, as shown in Table 1.

On the one hand, teachers' labor relations became more precarious, since these contracts were temporary and lacked the same rights guaranteed to stable teachers (hired by the public admissions process): job stability, a bonus 90-day paid leave every five years, and paid absences, among others. However, some of the teachers, originally hired as temps, successfully pressured through the teachers' union to obtain equal labor rights, even though they had not gone through the public admissions process (classified as categories "P" and "F" in Box 1). Meanwhile, education in the state was running adrift, since classes were taken over by individuals with proficiency in the course subject, but with unknown backgrounds.

Importantly, the state government defines temporary teachers as those in categories "O", "S", and "V", shown in Box 1. The difference between is that "O" teachers have classes assigned to them when the regular teacher is absent for more than 15 days, for example on maternity leave. Those hired as

Table 1

Distribution of teachers to type of employment contract. State of São Paulo, Brazil, 1999.

	January	March	July	August	September	October	November	December
Stable	64,414	60,125	56,909	57,245	56,697	56,017	55,550	54,861
Non-stable	132,705	115,700	135,422	135,909	139,550	147,633	149,226	145,670
Total	197,119	175,825	192,331	193,154	196,247	203,650	204,776	200,531

FSource: prepared by author, from data of the Division of Human Sources Management, São Paulo State Department of Education.

Box 1

Legislation on hiring formats for teachers in the São Paulo state school system.

Category	Type of contract
A	Full teacher position. Hired after public admissions exams for tests and titles. Entitled under SPPREV, Social Security System for Public Employees (RPPS), established by Complementary Law 1,010/2007.
P	<i>Teacher not hired by public admissions but who obtained job stability</i> – employed (admitted under Law 500/1974) with active employment contract as of Oct. 5, 1988, with more than five years of teaching practice as of that date. Declared stable under Brazil's 1988 National Constitution. Entitled under SPPREV, Social Security System for Public Employees (RPPS), established by Complementary Law 1,010/2007.
F	<i>Teacher not hired by public admissions but who obtained job stability</i> – employed (admitted under Law 500/1974) with active employment contract as of June 2, 2007. Earned the right not to be fired at the school administration's discretion. Entitled under SPPREV, Social Security System for Public Employees (RPPS), established by Complementary Law 1,010/2007.
S	<i>Occasional teacher</i> – admitted in 2007. Entitled under SPPREV, Social Security System for Public Employees (RPPS), established by Complementary Law 1,010/2007.
O	<i>Temporary teacher</i> – admitted after July 14, 2009, according to Complementary Law 1,093/2009, contributing to the National Social Security Institute (INSS).
V	<i>Occasional teacher</i> – admitted after July 14, 2009, according to Complementary Law 1,093/2009, contributing to the National Social Security Institute (INSS).
OFA/ACT	Teacher admitted on a <i>temporary</i> basis – obtained stability according to Law 1,010/2007. Any employee admitted according to Law 500/1974.

ACT: admitted on a temporary basis; OFA: occupants of job activity; SPPREV: São Paulo Previdência.

Source: Mattos⁴⁰. Updated by an interview with Maria José dos Santos, teaching supervisor (2018).

Note: our italics.

category “V” do not enjoy a classroom assignment, since they are teachers that substitute occasionally for regular teachers.

Despite an extensive discussion in various studies on NPM^{10,11,12,13}, it is indispensable to situate this policy option, since the Brazilian Federal Government (during the Fernando Henrique Cardoso Administration) and its main cogwheel, the state of São Paulo, formulated new stages in the policy, portrayed here as the main educational issue, with a view towards lending legitimacy to the encroachment of alternatives to public admissions contests for hiring teachers in the public sector¹⁴.

Thus, based on Harvey¹⁵ (an author dedicated to building a historical geography of capitalism), one notes the government's participation both in flexible accumulation (signaled by its break with the Fordist logic) and in accumulation by exploitation, a concept transported here via the understanding of the extrapolation of the public sector's boundaries in favor of the market. Such boundaries are

demarcated by the expansion of forms of privatization, via the entry of private enterprise in education, and by the economic rationality built visibly on the basis of precarious labor relations.

An examination of the data on hiring formats for teachers from 2000 to 2017 suggests a percentage (target) to be reached yearly with legal backing, since *Complementary Law n. 1,093* of July 16, 2009¹⁶, which rules on hiring teachers for predetermined periods, updated in 2017 (*Complementary Law n. 1,314* of December 28, 2017¹⁷), in the scope of the country's Labor Reform (in July that same year), specified the following in Article 6.1 of the transitional provisions: "In case of absolute necessity, duly justified by the hiring authority, this article's provisions may be applied to the 2015 and 2016 school years, in each year limiting the number of such contracts to a maximum of 50% (fifty percent) and 40% (forty percent), respectively, in relation to those signed in the 2014 school year".

This effectively legalized a practice that already existed, that is: to ensure a permanent average of 50% of contracts for teachers without public admissions, as shown in Figure 1.

Beside lacking the same labor rights as teachers hired through public admissions (Box 1), undergraduate students have been added steadily to the teacher workforce. In 2005 and 2010 (based on *Resolutions SE 90*¹⁸ and *77*¹⁹, respectively), university students in any semester of training were hired; 2013, those concluded the first semester were hired²⁰. Finally, in 2017 (*Resolution SE 72/2016*²¹, altered by *65/2017*²²), there was a restriction: only those who had completed at least 50% of the course.

There was a significant drop in non-stable teachers in 2017, as shown in Table 2. This resulted from a series of measures that also aimed to cut costs, such as: an increase in the number of students per class (*Resolution SE 2* of January 8, 2016²³, allowing a 10% increase in the number of students per class), incentives for schools to eliminate night courses, and an increase in stable teachers' workload. The changes in the legislation, aimed at reducing precarious contracts, meant that stable teachers could have a workweek of up to 64 hours. This meant that teachers hired through public admissions and with a 40-hour workweek would have a supplementary temporary contract for the other 24 hours, but that they would teach other subjects based on their teacher training. From this perspective,

Figure 1

Distribution of teachers by type of employment contract. State of São Paulo, Brazil, 2000-2017.

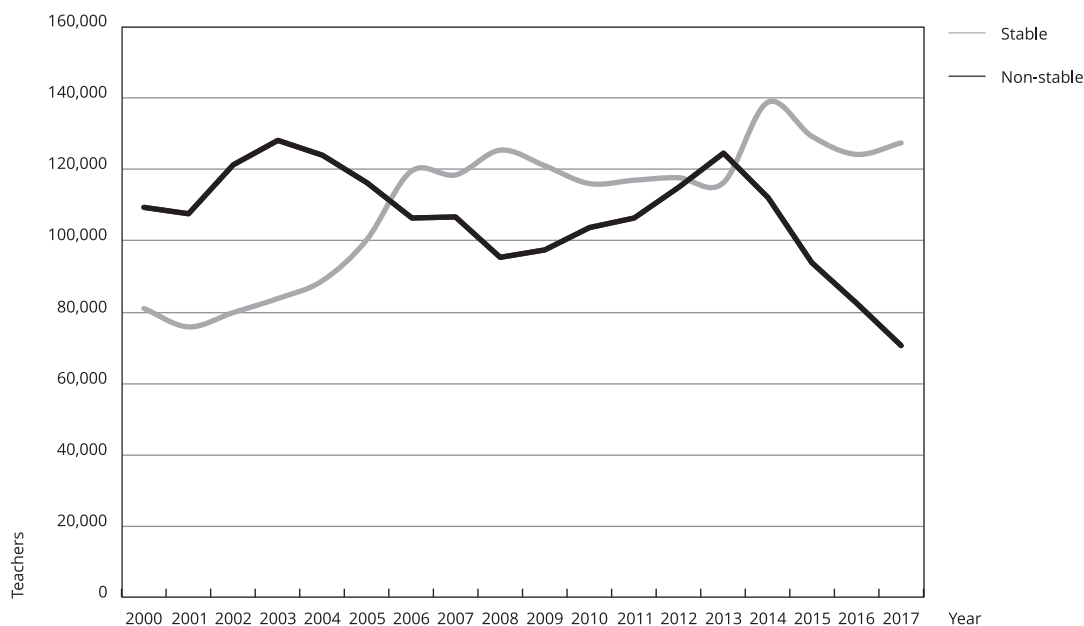


Table 2

Distribution of teachers by type of employment contract. State of São Paulo, Brazil, 1999-2018.

Year	January		November	
	Stable	Non-stable	Stable	Non-stable
1999	64,414	132,705	55,550	149,226
2000	49,388	132,802	81,022	109,453
2001	84,874	92,446	75,874	107,504
2002	83,432	94,547	79,846	121,335
2003	79,297	101,798	83,787	128,292
2004	83,370	105,194	88,731	123,971
2005	98,470	94,157	100,222	116,298
2006	106,324	90,541	119,436	106,272
2007	119,081	83,016	118,434	106,785
2008	118,258	84,534	125,352	95,334
2009	125,397	78,446	120,984	97,342
2010	120,931	94,809	115,987	103,844
2011	115,814	101,769	116,927	106,301
2012	123,808	81,573	117,623	115,174
2013	117,077	97,706	116,122	124,718
2014	115,668	73,926	138,708	112,028
2015	137,834	88,266	129,185	93,941
2016	127,783	88,869	124,202	82,633
2017	123,508	77,007	123,508	77,007
2018	127,051	50,931	-	-

Source: prepared by author, from data of the Division of Human Sources Management, São Paulo State Department of Education.

for example, a sociology teacher who had taken Social Sciences in the 1980s, whose course of study in some schools had included three semesters of statistics, would be prepared and authorized to teach mathematics.

Considering the set of non-classroom activities inherent to teaching, the intensification of teaching work is readily observable, which means the following according to Durand ²⁴ (p. 267): “*a reduction in the porosity of work time: the purpose is to suppress the dead time between tasks, to reduce the recovery time between different operations (...), to make the different parts of the human body work on different tasks all at the same time*”.

The author thus highlights the existence of a process of “densification of time”, since there are activities to be performed every minute of the workday, and in the case of teachers, one can add many others besides the workday specified in their contracts. For Durand, this situation signals the deterioration of working conditions and suggests the addition of another concept to the analyses: that of workload. The concept proposed by Jean-Pierre Durand ²⁴ dialogues with the work and the subjects of the work and, therefore, refers to the subjective aspects present in the work process. The proposed definition links a set of factors indicative of the perception of workload: on the one hand, physical and psychological elements concerning the individual, such as age and health conditions, but also social conditions, involving origin, training level, family life, leisure-time activity, etc. This group of factors should be analyzed in relationship to the work’s characteristics, such as the management format, salaries, and work organization in general.

As we reconstructed the scenario of teachers’ hiring, we aimed to highlight the characteristics of objective precarity ³, referring to the vulnerability imposed on these subjects, who are responsible for São Paulo’s basic education.

Uberization of work: from the concept to the app

We should begin by explaining what we mean by uberization of work in the current article. According to Tom Slee ²⁵, Uber Technologies Inc. was born of a marriage between a mobile app and limousine drivers whose services were paid for by customers using their credit cards. The company then expanded by adding nonprofessional drivers of luxury cars, skyrocketing from 10,000 cars in 2013 to 150,000 in just two years, with a presence in 83 countries and 632 cities.

To the extent that an app assumes the shape of a concept, already becoming a verb, in our understanding is it only conjugated in the present tense?

Uber signs up drivers with no specific training, sufficing it to have their work tools: a car and a cellphone with internet access. Their services are sold at lower prices than those charged by taxi drivers, who are required to pay taxes, to be certified, and to comply with a series of rules and regulations according to specific national and local legislation. An advantage announced to customers by Uber is that it informs in advance the data on the automobile and the driver, as well as the total fare. As Slee concludes ²⁵, Uber is not campaigning only against taxi companies, it is also campaigning against the prevailing regulations for taxis.

In fact, uberization has extrapolated individual transportation to reach other segments of the labor market and become the prime expression of acute labor deregulation.

The drivers have no contracts, no labor rights, and no specific qualifications for profession, besides having to pay high percentages of the fares to the company (up to 25% of the total). These are not this work's only characteristics. As sociologist Ludmila Abílio ²⁶ summarizes: *"To be model workers in a multitudinous registry means in practice to be self-employed workers who bear their work's risks and costs, who determine their own workday, who decide on their dedication to the work, and who also create strategies to deal with the gigantic competition hovering constantly over their heads"*.

In this sense, one needs to address the permanent characteristics of precarity in labor relations, as well as to highlight what are actually new aspects in this phenomenon. A comparison of these drivers to non-stable teachers in the São Paulo state school system reveals similarities, although they practice different professions.

According to Abílio ²⁶, this logic's juxtapositions transposed to the reality of non-stable teachers, as summarized in Box 2, result in: (a) the registration of undergraduate students or graduates trained as temporary or part-time teachers in teaching departments and schools, respectively, without an app for this purpose and (b) the propagation of an idea of freedom at work, based on self-definition of the workday and earnings obtained from self-employed work. This dimension consists of a false notion of autonomy and independence, implies major intensification of work and the workload in

Box 2

Comparative summary: Uber drivers and non-stable teachers in the São Paulo state school system..

Uber	Non-stable teacher
Indeterminate workday	Indeterminate workday
Uncertified drivers	Uncertified teachers (student teachers and individuals with other backgrounds, some even with diplomas, but in other professions and/or with no teacher training)
Resumé registered (app)	Resumé registered (with the school boards and/or schools)
Lack of labor rights	Some labor rights, but short of those for stable teachers
Continually assessed	Continually assessed
25% of gross fares paid to the company	Not applicable
On demand	On demand

order to obtain sufficient earnings for survival. The question is under what conditions workers, men and women, shaped as the “*class-that-lives-from-work*”²⁷, succeed in selling their labor power with prospects for liberation. In the case of non-stable teachers, according to the interviews, there is an unceasing search for alternatives in schools that offer longer staying time, namely those with teachers on maternity leave, bonus leave (sabbatical), or sick leave, since this is the only way for the non-stable teachers to have steady earnings to meet their monthly expenses for survival. These juxtapositions further result in (c) the creation of strategies to deal with competition between drivers: a clean car, offering candy or snacks to riders, and friendly chitchat. Among teachers, they are the ones that meet the prescribed work’s demands, who deal with the problems of unruly classes, and who agree to teach any subject, even outside their area of training. According to one interviewee (a non-stable teacher), “*It’s good to be seen by the administration as a teacher who doesn’t rock the boat, who accepts any challenge. They always call us back*” (student teacher). Finally, they result in (d) a permanent assessment of the drivers, since the app requires the customer to judge the supply: cleanliness, politeness, the best route, etc. In the case of teachers, there is a homogeneous assessment of students’ learning, measured by standardized tests and tied to forms of control, constantly redesigned and increasingly refined. The attempt to prescribe intellectual work through teaching manuals invariably worded in the imperative verb tense, more than suggesting activities, induces teachers to adopt rigid teaching approaches and content. Although illogical, non-stable teachers are targets, just as much as stable teachers, of pressure to achieve grading results, since the logic of educational policy is sustained by training students to perform tests. Forms of resistance to these standards exist, but in the breaks in the interviews one senses an overall adherence to the norm, although some teachers express regret.

There are thus convergent elements between the two professions showing that uberization is not totally or essentially new.

Still, with airs of modernity, the Uber Age is increasingly shaping a new way of marketing the workforce in the public sector. The most striking example was conceived by the government of Ribeirão Preto²⁸, a city with 700,000 inhabitants in the state of São Paulo, which developed an app for hiring temporary substitute teachers. The initiative provided for a dynamic with a 30-minute interval between the online invitation and the teacher’s response, plus an hour for the teacher to reach the school. The logic, similar to that applied by the São Paulo State Government for decades, goes beyond the precarious contract to require permanent on-demand availability, while simultaneously violating the principle of equal rights in the teaching profession. It thus responds exclusively as a quick fix to the problem in education, disregards the perspective of work per se, and offends the quality of teaching. Importantly, the Municipal School Board in Ribeirão Preto rejected the proposal and succeeded in vetoing the project, at least for the time being.

Besides the comparative elements, it is important to highlight those pertaining to changes in the work’s organization, as mentioned above concerning the characteristics of Fordism, in the mass of workers previously involved in the work, and the workers’ forms of organization. Toyotism, in turn, displays significant changes in various aspects. Under the concept of the “unmanned factory”, organized with fewer workers but without decreasing the productivity rates and steadily sustained by advancing microelectronics, two features emerge: outsourcing and multitasking. Outsourcing is a key factor not only for precarious labor relations, intensification of work, and loss of rights, but also in the disaggregation of workers’ collectives, pulverization of men and women workers across various production units, factories, and microenterprises, among others, and trade union representation and organizational capacity, with a view towards confronting the new forms of workforce exploitation. Meanwhile, the notion of multitasking should be understood as distinct from Taylorist specialization, since from capital’s perspective the old parceling of tasks does not meet the demands of the economy and production.

The claim is thus of a more skilled worker, with the false idea of greater participation in the work process, since this participation is understood in the work’s organization (for purposes of performance assessment) as the worker’s contribution to improving production. Thus, knowledge of the work process is appropriated by the organization, aimed at incorporating it into the prescription, constantly glimpsing an increase in productivity and a proportional decrease in the share of live work. The measurement and assessment of individual and team production create permanent competition, inscribing in this scenario the forms of societal domination they worship: “*a subjectivism*”

and fragmented ideals that extoll exacerbated individualism as opposed to solidarity and collective and social action”²⁷ (p. 86).

If such assessments emerge acutely in Toyotism, how are they shaped in the uberization phase of work?

According to Marcio Pochmann, interviewed by André Antunes²⁹, competition and disputes within the working class are taken to new levels in uberization, imposing the logic of “*everyone for themselves*”, resulting in the weakening of workers’ collectives and trade union representation. In other words, according to the same author: “*In Fordism and even in Toyotism there is a concept of the working class (...). What we now have in fact is a transition to this idea, no longer of worker, but of entrepreneur. You may earn as a worker, but you have the aspirations of the consumer middle class. It’s an ideological dispute. If you don’t admit to being a worker, the workers’ struggles lose out*”²⁹.

Aspects related to the dismantling of collectives and the expansion of individualization concern new forms of experience of (and in) work that directly affect the subject: “*the more subordination is individualized and personalized, the harder it is to withstand. It becomes rawer, more uncomfortable, almost obscene when it is not part of collective experiences, when it directly affects the person, besides the worker*”²⁶.

Linhardt also emphasizes that target-setting and forms of evaluation are individualized, a dimension that implies subjective and emotional mobilization, with permanent requirements “*to be ambitious, to be passionate, to display your talent (...), to make the impossible possible*”³⁰.

Such perspectives reverberate among public schoolteachers, as we will show in the next section.

Collectives: resistance and discouragement

Our studies that have been concluded revealed three groups of teachers in the São Paulo state school system. The data appeared with a generational divide in the analysis, although it was not the study’s focus.

The aim here is to present the groups in order to establish links between the collectives and their possible dismantlement, in addition to ways of confronting situations such as extreme precarity, expressed in this phase of uberization of work.

We observed the following three groups of schoolteachers: Group A: on the verge of giving up; Group B: in defense of public education; and Group C: we are the school.

Group A: on the verge of giving up

This group, heard and identified in the studies, consists of stable teachers, thus legitimately holding their teaching positions based on public admissions exams, with the attending labor rights. They are men and women 40 years or older and thus have been in the profession longer than groups B and C. Interestingly, between the two studies, this group substantially changed its stance in relation to the profession, educational policy, and working conditions, closely conditioned by the policy option made in recent decades, heavily based on rationality and managerialism.

When asked to characterize the state’s school policy and its effects on teaching and the profession’s autonomy, the initial observation was that the school and teaching practice exceeded the rules laid down by the state authority.

The scenario with a political option for NPM in the state of São Paulo is oriented by managerialism, economic rationality, target-setting, and verification of learning. In 2008, the state created the program known as São Paulo Makes the School, which standardized the school curriculum, accompanied by publication of the *Teacher’s Manuals*, in addition to teaching materials for all the course subjects with the aim (in our understanding) of directing the teacher’s classroom work. Beyond the guidelines, the manuals explicitly attempted to prescribe the teacher’s intellectual work.

When asked about the possibility of having their intellectual work prescribed, with the resulting loss of autonomy, the most frequent reaction during the interviews was, “*I just close the classroom door and teach my class*” (stable teacher, 2013).

Still, the policy was refined by more rigid forms of control in the classroom, involving peers (supervisors, principals, and study coordinators) in such practice, with the adoption of annual assess-

ment systems and bonuses for the school's faculty as a whole. From the initial observation of preservation of autonomy, this group began to express profound discontent with the work and with the transformation of education in the state: *"In my opinion this is not education... much less quality education"* (stable teacher, 2015/2016). And further: *"I'm about to retire, and what this policy tells me is that I don't know how to teach classes"* (stable teacher, 2015/2016).

Metzger et al.³¹ discuss the meaning of violence at work and contend that it begins when the acts entail some type of harm against the other. For the authors, the breach of physical integrity means bodily harm. Meanwhile, breach of moral integrity consists of *"the imposition of a system of beliefs and values to actively contradict, wound, and destroy the concept of good life manifested by the victims"*³¹ (p. 231). Finally, breach of social integrity refers to situations in which members of a collective are excluded and the very permanence of others is imposed.

The experience of at least one of these forms is seen here as a source of suffering and distress at work, the latter defined by Sato³² (p. 492) as: *"control, affecting precisely workers' relationship to the workplace, where distress is not limited merely to the presence of these problems, but to the subject's condition in the work relationship, where discomfort, suffering, and effort are present. In other words, it is the relationship maintained with the work and its conditions, as allowed by the organizational context"*.

The condition of distress observed in the interviews intertwines with the perceived desire to give up, among the teachers that are approaching retirement: *"I'm going to wait... I'm nearing retirement... It's not worth it now to throw it all out the window"* (stable teacher, 2015/2016). Other teachers frequently think of looking for other work alternatives outside of teaching: *"I've thought all the time about looking for another profession, another job. I love the school and the students, but I can't teach class any more the way I want to, the way I'd like to"* (stable teacher, 2015/2016).

This situation rules out any approach to labor union struggles. The teacher union representation has also waned, compared to the union's activist history in previous decades, more recently adopting softer stances and limited to the public sector but without major defense of teachers' rights, particularly related to working conditions.

Group B: in defense of public education

This group consists of stable teachers up to 39 years of age, also protected by labor rights, since they have joined teaching based on public admissions. Most of the interviewees had received their academic training in public or confessional universities, which in Brazil tend to have the best quality teaching. This set of men and women teachers are engaged in the defense of high-quality public education, including union struggles, although they are not necessarily union members.

These teachers voice harsh criticism towards the practices inspired by the NPM, such as targets and grading formats, which they see as undermining knowledge-building, especially due to the strong emphasis on two areas: mathematics and Portuguese. They contend that it is necessary to rebuild the school and its relations, besides fighting for education as a public good. They attempt to discuss, with their coworkers, ways to organize and build demands or joint planning aimed at valuing the meaning of their teaching profession and work.

They experience resistance and pressure, both from coworkers to join the struggles and to meet the targets set for the school. They report that they constantly hear the following from older colleagues in the state school system: *"I'm tired of rowing against the tide. It's your turn to fight"* (teacher, 2015/2016). Based on the interviews, this group sees in their colleagues the material expression of the concept of managerialism formulated by Metzger et al.³¹ (p. 228): *"Generally speaking, what we call company managerialism refers to the unconscious appropriation, by a large number of individuals and collectives, of preoccupation with efficiency and the primacy of performance: hereinafter it is taken for granted to reason with the same references used in the economic field"*.

In a certain sense they acknowledge that management has succeeded, to the extent, as Gaulejac³³ notes, in obtaining the workers' incorporation of its own tools and techniques. This results in what will be called a state of *"alienation to the nth power, since it is the subject himself who becomes the main motor force [of management]"*³³ (p. 96).

These teachers do not consider giving up on their career, nor of replacing it with teaching in private schools, even while admitting that to earn enough income to support their families they have

to work three shifts, often in various schools and school systems. Changes to the legislation, aimed at reducing the number of precarious contracts, meant that stable teachers could have a workweek of up to 64 hours. This meant that teachers hired through public admissions and with a 40-hour workweek would have a supplementary temporary contract for the other 24 hours, but that they would teach other subjects based on their teacher training. From this perspective, for example, a sociology teacher who had taken Social Sciences in the 1980s, whose course of study in some schools had included three semesters of statistics, would be prepared and authorized to teach mathematics.

Some of these teachers reported working 62 hours a week in the classroom in order to increase their monthly income.

Group C: we are the school

The characterization of this group relates to the precarious labor relations discussed previously, since all these teachers are on unstable contracts.

The group is significantly heterogeneous, consisting of student teachers, teachers with college degrees, and members of other professions who are allowed to teach in the classroom. Resolution SE 65/2017²², dedicated to regulating the process for 2018, indicates in paragraph 7 that whenever there is a shortage of teachers, the classes can be taught by student teachers or by “*applicants who lack accreditation or any qualifications referring to the subject or class assigned to them*”, as specified in item 3 of the same paragraph.

Contrary to the study’s initial expectations, which assumed that we would find young university students as temporary teachers, we encountered student teachers over 30 years of age and mostly from occupations with lower professional skills. We interviewed workers previously engaged in construction work, transportation (truck loader), beauticians (manicures, waxing technicians), sales attendants, janitors, and nannies.

Siblot et al.³⁴ conducted an extensive study in the sociology of the contemporary popular classes, underscoring the term “popular”, which gradually, and particularly beginning in the 1970s, occupied the conceptual space of the “working class”, which as formulated by Thompson³⁵ is the configuration of a group bearing a common identity forged from the experience of building a characteristic culture. In the author’s words: “*Class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and generally opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born – or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class-consciousness does not*”³⁵ (p. 10).

Olivier Schwartz³⁶ analyzes the class concept, more specifically that of the popular classes in the context of the 1990s, in order to link two dimensions: class and culture. In other words, on the one hand he analyzes the formation of a group characterized by relations of domination, both economic and cultural/symbolic. On the other hand, he focuses on groups that share “*common traits in terms of culture, lifestyle, and representations, forms of ‘cultural separation’ that differentiate them from other groups*”³⁶. Meanwhile, Schwartz calls attention to the mismatch that can occur in the relations between schooling and subaltern work, which he views as those marked by the contracts’ vulnerability, low wages, and limited possibilities for professional advancement.

In our view, this perspective can be transposed to the reality of this group of student teachers, who have a background in schooling, especially in university training, based on the propagation in Brazil of private teaching institutions with course offerings mostly via distance learning or a low-tuition classroom format. The group also includes participants in student loan programs and/or purchase of admissions places, via the Ministry of Education, in private institutions.

This group thus displays a unique situation, the experience of which allowed the members to overcome a work routine devoid of content and meaning, often bordering on hard physical labor, and marked by rigid norms and control. The situation also provides an opportunity for access to higher education, even though tied to mass manufacturing of diplomas rather than quality training.

This observation raised a series of theoretical questions for the object of analysis, both in terms of the teachers’ class representation and by grasping, in the teachers’ comments, the way they valued the

profession, an opposite feeling to that glimpsed in the profession, represented here by the two previous groups, and in the commonsense image of teaching in Brazilian society.

Thus, this group's interviews revealed a stance of refuting and opposing the two previous groups, especially concerning the set of rights gained in public schools. Their remarks repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to education, to the school, and to the students, but without mentioning the precarious contracts or the rigidly prescribed work. On the contrary, they adapt to the working conditions, for example by creating what they call "wildcard classes": *"This class is all-purpose: it works if they call me in to give a math class, and it also works for a history class"* (student teacher, History major, 2015). Or in another case: *"I'm lucky, because I'm a math teacher, and everybody has difficulty with the subject. So, they can call me in to teach any subject, and I just give my standard math review"* (student teacher, Math major, 2015).

According to the interviewees, they hop from school to school in different time slots to complete a workday of 9 classroom hours. In this sense, they fail to share the schools' collective nature, especially because in part the schools do not allow them to participate in faculty meetings or meetings with the students' parents. On the other hand, there are cases in which the administration and other teachers refer to the non-stable teachers as "stable temps", since they are in that school practically every day, substituting for colleagues in various subjects, but without the same rights.

We also identified what we took to be a "pedagogy of improvisation". When they are called in with little lead time before the class and no access to the absent colleague's course plan, this has consequences for both the teachers and the students. One of the interviewees, a university student in her second semester of History, reported: *"When a teacher is absent in any subject, they send you in, and then I do it my own way. Because, how am I supposed to teach a math class? I won't know how to correct the students' work, and if the teacher has left exercises, I pass them out, the students do the exercises, and I leave them for her to correct. Otherwise, I give them an exercise in Portuguese, because the fact that the students have a substitute teacher that day doesn't mean they're getting the scheduled content"* (student teacher, 2015).

This issue, according to the interviewees, fuels disrespect and unruliness in the class and contributes to the degradation of working conditions, since the substitute teachers know that the students sense that they lack a command of the course content and have not planned the class. An example is an interview with a student teacher in her third year of Portuguese at the university, and who, after this episode, began to wonder whether she would stay in teaching: *"Yesterday a student threw some coins at me, and I had to leave the room to cry in the restroom. He said, 'Leave us alone! Take these coins, which is what you're earning to teach us this class and let us do whatever we want! That's not what I'm in school for!'"* (student teacher, 2016).

Despite the various situations involving non-stable teachers, ranging from improvised classes to disrespect from students, these teachers challenge the position of their stable colleagues and show how resolute they are on this: *"They're whiners... they just keep asking for more and more. They don't want to teach class, but we do. We have the energy, and we're game for anything"* (student teacher, History major, 2015). The interviews mostly show signs of a certain acquiescence, since they lack both a critique of their precarious condition and prescribed work or any support for the stable colleagues' demands for better working conditions.

Marx & Engels, in *The German Ideology*³⁷ (p. 63), state: *"The separate individuals only form a class insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other, as competitors. On the other hand, the class in its turn achieves an independent existence over against the individuals, so that the latter find the conditions of their existence predestined, and hence have their position in life and their personal development assigned to them by their class, become subsumed under it"*.

Thus, the third group of teachers take a stance against ties of greater solidarity and more in favor of competition concerning which group has (or lacks) legitimacy to effectively practice the profession, since they are the ones who *"have the energy"* (student teacher, 2016) to face the daily school routine.

Final remarks

The aim was to debate the extent to which uberization is a new phenomenon, based on the work and hiring formats for teachers in basic education in the São Paulo state school system. Despite the intrinsic technological innovations, as a phenomenon per se, uberization replicates existing characteristics, reaffirming a history of accumulated precarious practices while innovating in others.

Uber drivers are typical “*just-in-time workers*”, adapted to the expression “*just-in-time collaborators*” as used by Abílio ²⁶. They are amateur drivers, continually assessed by users, making their services available via the app, without contracts, and without labor rights, transporting passengers at lower fares than those practiced by taxi drivers. Besides having to be on call, Uber drivers are subject to intensification of work, marked by long workdays in order to obtain sufficient income to survive. Such exacerbated individualization of work triggers serious processes of dismantling collectives.

If the app proclaims the idea of an “*on demand worker*” to carry passengers, the idea of an “*on demand teacher*” is no different, subject to precarious contracts and necessarily available to take over classes in any subject except Phys Ed, which Brazilian legislation limits exclusively to accredited Phys Ed teachers.

In this sense, we contend that there is a situation of quasi-uberization in the São Paulo state school system (“quasi,” because the two professions, drivers and teachers, do not coincide exactly, and because the system maintains preexisting characteristics).

In light of scenarios built with more precarity and robust individualization, the teachers’ remarks reveal the theoretical proposal of Dardot & Laval ³⁸, which underscores neoliberalism as a devastating factor for workers’ institutions and rights. The authors add that neoliberalism aims to undermine social relations and foments situations of competition among peers, coercing individuals to adopt behaviors and attitudes as entrepreneurs of themselves.

As revealed by our analysis of the interviews, this perspective is already underway among the teachers, meaning that they are involved in an educational policy oriented by neoliberal principles that downsize the state’s role. In terms of labor relations, the policy allows the use of precarious contracts and intentional permissiveness in employing individuals with different backgrounds, alien to education, or student teachers who not only have not completed their university studies, but who teach classes that have nothing to do with their training, with high levels of improvisation and sustained by standardized teaching materials.

We thus aimed to present the three groups of teachers that emerged from the studies in order to reconstruct the scenario of fragmentation of the teaching profession, fostered in part by precarious labor relations. We wished to highlight a dual trend. On the one hand, “quasi-uberized” teachers represented 50% of the total teacher workforce in the São Paulo state school system in the period studied here. We found similarities in their work to that of Uber drivers, given the variety of course subjects the teachers had to teach, lack of retention in a single school, and the long workweek as a condition for a subsistence income. Meanwhile, the individualization of these workers runs counter to teachers’ collective interests.

The category “contradiction” emerged when the teachers launched a strike for better working conditions in March 2015, a strike that lasted 84 days. The movement drew major support not only from teachers, but also from parents and students. Still, the strike was eventually called off, met by stark indifference from the São Paulo State Government and resulting in no real gains.

That same year, *Complementary Law n. 1,277* (Dec. 22, 2015) ³⁹ was enacted, ruling on temporary contracts. Paragraph 1 provides that non-stable teachers could only have new contracts signed at least 180 days after their old contracts expired, sparking new dissatisfaction and protests. Still, the struggle was for improvements in maintaining precarious contracts rather than for more public admissions exams. Yet the mobilization did obtain a partial victory by reducing the interval for new contracts from 180 to 40 days, in 2017.

In this scenario, the São Paulo State Government still feels comfortable and continues to undermine the capacity to change the overall situation of precarity and degradation of working conditions, leading to the annihilation of quality in education.

This emphasizes the condition emerging from wage-earning society based on profound silence vis-à-vis the degradation of working conditions in exchange for payment, although variable and inconstant. In keeping with Linhart³⁰, subordination is a renunciation of oneself, and the growing process of individualization in modern-day capitalism generates suffering in work, with dire consequences for teachers' physical and mental health.

Additional information

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Resumo

O presente ensaio visa a problematizar e discutir em que medida a uberização do trabalho se caracteriza, de fato, como um fenômeno de tipo novo. O estudo apoia-se em pesquisas qualitativas e em análise documental referentes às formas de contratação entre 1999 e 2017. Procede-se, para tal análise, à construção do processo histórico das práticas concernentes às relações de trabalho pelo Governo Estadual de São Paulo, Brasil, as quais são marcadas pela flexibilização intencional, orientadas pelos princípios intrínsecos da Nova Gestão Pública. Constata-se que a empresa Uber, para além da economia digital, propagou formas ainda mais flexíveis das observadas durante e após a reestruturação produtiva, propalando e visibilizando o trabalhador sem contrato, a intensificação do trabalho e os ganhos minimizados. A correspondência com o trabalho docente recupera as raízes históricas da fundação das relações precárias com a categoria e revela que tais características não se configuram como de tipo novo entre os que exercem a profissão. Averiguam-se características semelhantes às praticadas pela Uber e, portanto, conclui-se que há um processo de quasi-uberização concernente ao trabalho docente. Apreende-se, igualmente, a presença de fortes sinais do esfacelamento dos coletivos, posto que se divide em três grupos, identificados nos estudos realizados. Cada grupo apresenta particularidades que acentuam as nuances dos processos de individualização no trabalho, estratégia acoplada ao gerencialismo e à constatação de que o neoliberalismo atinge os indivíduos, alterando valores e subjetividades, exaltando a competitividade e o individualismo nos processos de trabalho.

Condições de Trabalho; Docentes; Gestão; Setor Público

Resumen

Este ensayo pretende problematizar y discutir en qué medida la uberización del trabajo se caracteriza, de hecho, como un nuevo tipo de fenómeno. El estudio se apoya en investigaciones cualitativas y en un análisis documental, referente a las formas de contratación entre 1999 y 2017. Se procede, para tal análisis, a la construcción del proceso histórico de las prácticas concernientes a las relaciones de trabajo por el gobierno del estado de São Paulo, Brasil, que están marcadas por la flexibilización intencionada, orientadas por los principios intrínsecos de la Nueva Gestión Pública. Se constata que la empresa Uber, más allá de la economía digital, propagó formas incluso más flexibles que las observadas durante y tras la reestructuración productiva, generalizando y visibilizando al trabajador sin contrato, además de conseguir una intensificación del trabajo y beneficios minimizados. La correspondencia con el trabajo docente recupera raíces históricas, basadas en relaciones precarias con la categoría profesional, y revela que tales características no se configuran como un nuevo tipo de relación laboral entre quienes ejercen la profesión. Se investigan características semejantes a las practicadas por Uber y, por tanto, se concluye que existe un proceso de uberización concerniente al trabajo docente. Se percibe, igualmente, la presencia de fuertes señales del resquebrajamiento de los colectivos, puesto que se dividen en tres grupos, identificados en los estudios realizados. Cada grupo presenta particularidades que acentúan los matices de los procesos de individualización en el trabajo, estrategia acoplada al mercantilismo, y a la constatación de que el neoliberalismo alcanza a los individuos, alterando valores y subjetividades, exaltando la competitividad y el individualismo en los procesos de trabajo.

Condiciones de Trabajo; Maestros; Gestión; Sector Público

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