

Class stratification and social mobility in the transition from school to work of Brazilian youths: reflections and research agenda

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Abstract

There is a growing demand for studies on the transition from school to work in Brazil. This comes at a time that there is an increase in enrollment for higher education and when there is a lack of skilled labor force in the country. However, many of the existing studies refer to empirical research, without considering some particularities of this transition process, such as socioeconomic specificities and the recent increase in access to higher education in Brazil. This article aims to discuss the concept of transition from school to work, integrated with other concepts such as social mobility and social class, based on Pierre Bourdieu's and Jessé Souza's theories. It is proposed that the transition from school to work starts to be seen as an important period for social mobility, taking into account the Brazilian historical and social singularities in its theoretical construction. Such understanding may contribute to the development of a Brazilian school-to-work transition theory, since it contains other elements besides qualification that interfere in this process, countering the discourse of individual meritocracy for entering the labor market.

Keywords: Labor market. Transition school-to-work. Social class. Social Mobility. Young people.

Estrutura de classe e mobilidade social no processo de inserção profissional de jovens no Brasil: reflexões e agenda de pesquisa

Resumo

Diante do contexto de aumento do número de matrículas no Ensino Superior brasileiro e do discurso organizacional de falta de mão de obra qualificada no mercado de trabalho brasileiro, cresce a importância de estudos acerca de inserção profissional no país. Contudo, grande parte dos já existentes se refere a pesquisas empíricas, sem contemplar particularidades como as especificidades socioeconômicas e a recente expansão do Ensino Superior. Assim, este artigo discute o processo de inserção profissional integrando-o aos conceitos de mobilidade e classe social, à luz das teorias de Pierre Bourdieu e Jessé Souza. A partir disso, propõe-se que a inserção profissional seja analisada como um momento que pode aumentar as chances de mobilidade social, levando-se em conta as singularidades históricas e sociais do Brasil nessa construção. Tal entendimento pode contribuir para o desenvolvimento de uma teoria acerca da inserção profissional no país, ao evidenciar a existência de outros elementos, para além da formação, que podem interferir nesse processo, rebatendo o discurso da meritocracia individual no acesso dos jovens ao mercado de trabalho.

Palavras-chave: Mercado de trabalho. Inserção profissional. Classe social. Mobilidade social. Jovens.

Estructura de clases y movilidad social en el proceso de inserción profesional de jóvenes en Brasil: reflexiones y agenda de investigación

Resumen

Ante el contexto de aumento del número de matrículas en la educación superior brasileña, al tiempo que se destaca la falta de mano de obra calificada, crece la importancia de los estudios sobre la inserción profesional en el país. Sin embargo, gran parte de los existentes se refiere a investigaciones empíricas, sin considerar las peculiaridades de este proceso, tales como las especificidades socioeconómicas y la reciente expansión de la educación superior. Así, este artículo se propone discutir el proceso de inserción profesional integrándolo a los conceptos de movilidad y clase social, a luz de teorías de Pierre Bourdieu y Jessé Souza. Se sugiere que la inserción profesional sea vista como un período importante para la movilidad social y que tenga en cuenta las singularidades históricas y sociales de Brasil en esa construcción. Tal entendimiento puede contribuir al desarrollo de una teoría sobre la integración profesional en el país, a partir del momento en que evidencia la existencia de otros elementos, más allá de la formación, que pueden interferir en ese proceso, rebatiendo el discurso de la meritocracia individual en el acceso de los jóvenes al mercado de trabajo.

Palabras clave: Mercado laboral. Inserción profesional. Clase social. Movilidad social. Jóvenes.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last several decades, there have been several transformations in how the Brazilian education system and labor market is accessed. From the year 2000 to 2014 there was employment rate growth, even though new job positions were predominantly in short term activities, with fewer social guarantees and lower pay (POCHMANN, 2012). Without improving the quality of the job openings, as of 2014, the direction of domestic policy changed, and economic adjustment policies led the country back into a recession. As a result, unemployment rates rose to levels similar to the end of the prior century, reaching 13.1% at the beginning of 2018 (IBGE, 2018).

In this scenario, young people and adults compete for existing jobs, where the former have a lack experience and narrower access to networks in the competition for opportunities (ROCHA, 2008; GUIMARÃES-DOS-SANTOS, 2013). There is a domestic consensus that the labor market insertion process for youth is insecure and precarious, as the majority of them receive low wages, have informal connections, and work hours that don't allow them to continue their studies (GANZ LUCIO, 2013). This difficulty in accessing the labor market by young people is not restricted to the Brazilian context, since the overall rate of youth unemployment, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2017), is 13.1%. However, in 2016, Brazil had a little more than double the global rate, with a youth unemployment rate of 27.1% (ILO, 2017).

Despite this increase in the youth unemployment rate, the socio-historical context of the country in the last decade was marked by growth in the average years of schooling and an increase in the number of students enrolled in Higher Education, with an increase in the number of openings and enrollments, primarily in private institutions. However, despite the jump from 3 million enrollments in 2001 to more than 8 million in 2015 (BRASIL, 2016), education ceased being a deterministic element for getting new jobs, as it had been in prior decades (SPOSITO, 2005). The emergence of this type of entry into the labor market has revealed contradictions between professional expectations (FRANCO, MAGALHÃES and PAIVA, 2017) and amounts (PAIVA, FUJIHARA and REIS, 2017) of young people who enter the labor market, as well as the psychic illness process of these young people (SOUZA, HELAL and PAIVA, 2017).

Given the context of expanding access to higher education, new types of work, and their impact on the youth, the discussion regarding the process of professional insertion in Brazil, as Rocha-de-Oliveira and Piccinini (2012a) suggest, becomes increasingly important. However, the authors also point out that related studies have been limited mainly to empirical research, not being accompanied by theoretical discussions that seek to develop a concept of professional insertion that considers the socioeconomic specificities and the recent expansion of Higher Education in Brazil.

In order to advance theoretically in relation to this topic, this theoretical essay proposes to discuss professional insertion in the Brazilian context, integrating it to the concepts of mobility and social class, hoping to highlight the importance of a Brazilian theoretical and methodological construction for professional insertion, based on local historical, social, and economic aspects.

Although many researchers have considered studies regarding social class and mobility issues to be outdated and no longer pertinent after the arrival of the Social Welfare period in the central countries (PEUGNY, 2014), in recent years, such issues have been found to be relevant and current, due to the increased level of inequality in these countries (OECD, 2015). In the international scenario, the works of Chan and Goldthorpe (2007), Peugny (2007, 2014), Masson and Suteau (2010), Anthias (2012), Chan and Boliver (2013), Beaud (2014), Abrahansen and Drange (2015), Atkinson (2015), Friedman (2016), Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison (2017) stand out. On the domestic front, works such as those of Scalon (2009), Ribeiro (2006, 2012), Ribeiro and Scalon (2001), Ribeiro and Schlegel (2015) and Souza (2006, 2012) are samples of how the topic has been addressed in Brazil.

Thus, this study is divided into four sections after this introduction. The first brings reflections regarding professional insertion. The second topic addresses the concepts of mobility and social class. The third section discusses the importance of these concepts for the development of a Brazilian theory of professional insertion. Finally, considerations are made with a proposal for a research agenda.

PROFESSIONAL INSERTION

Globally, discussions about the transition process between education and entry into the labor market as a research topic are relatively recent - the 1960s - and gave rise to several terms with multiple interpretations. In this article, we chose the term *professional insertion*, which was born in France in the 1970s, replacing *entry into active life*, because we believe that this concept, in its sociological construction (DUBAR, 2001; ROCHA-DE-OLIVEIRA and PICCININI, 2012b) makes it possible to understand the transition process between the university system and entry into the Brazilian labor market.

The term professional insertion arises when there are increased difficulties faced by young people when they finish their academic training and enter the labor market, which becomes a complex and long-term process of going back and forth between temporary activities and unemployment (ALVES, 2007). For this reason, studies on this subject in France are growing, mainly around two theoretical lines: from an economic perspective, with authors like Vincens (1997) and Vernières (1997); and a sociological perspective, with authors such as Dubar (1994, 2001), Galland (2000, 2007), Nicole-Drancourt (1996) and Nicole-Drancourt and Roulleau-Berger (2001). According to Rocha-de-Oliveira and Piccinini (2012a, 2012b), the first one, due to its macroeconomic and longitudinal bias, enables market changes to be monitored at a time when the continuous employment crisis and the changes in labor make analysis even more complex. However, they focus too much on the maximization of individual production capacity, limiting themselves to economic mechanisms under conditions of perfect market competition.

Among the authors with a sociological approach, Dubar (2001) stands out, studying the professional insertion of young people when it became a social problem in France in the mid-1970s. The author believes that the conception of professional insertion is a historical construction, since it results from two ruptures, the first occurring during the second half of the 19th century, with the separation between the space for education (instruction and academics) and the space for work (employment and income), producing a separation between private life, outside of work and family-centered, and professional life (DUBAR, 2001). The second breakdown occurred more recently and is characterized by a discontinuity between finishing school and entering the labor market, since a diploma has failed to ensure entry into the job market in a job that corresponds to the level of education. This created a new space called post-school, characterized by competition for employment, as well as the choice of a partner, the departure from the parental household, and the decision to build a family.

Galland (2000), based on research carried out in France in 1992 and 1997, pointed out that such a transition stage was being delayed due to an extension of the study period. This extension can be explained, according to Nicole-Drancourt and Roulleau-Berger (2001), in part by the reforms that took place in the French education system between 1950 and 1975. These reforms were responsible for a massive entry of young people into the formal education system, first at the secondary level and then at the higher education level. Within civil society, formal education was seen by both young people and their families as an investment that could lead them to mobility and social advancement (NICOLE-DRANCOURT and ROULLEAU-BERGER, 2001), and was this desired, especially by the children of the working class.

The extension of the study period, coupled with the greater difficulty to enter the labor market, resulted in the postponement of the departure from parental households and the constitution of married life. According to Alves (2007), from the 1970s onwards, there was a deterioration of the insertion conditions for young people in France, related to the increase in precariousness and unemployment, the reduction of wages paid to young workers, and the precariousness of working conditions, which made it difficult for young population to establish themselves in the labor market. This contributed to the fact that young people spent more time in the education system, hoping to get better jobs with an increase in the number of years of training. However, today the French are already convinced that the generation after those who entered the labor market in the 1960s, even having spent more time in the educational process, will not be able to reach the same levels of income and quality of life as their parents, living under the fear of social demotion (PEUGNY, 2014).

Galland (2000) emphasizes that this situation cannot be seen as having the same meaning for all young people, emphasizing that young people are not a homogeneous group. Here, the author brings a relevant contribution to the understanding of professional insertion, by pointing out that other social elements such as gender, educational level, activity, and parental nationality influence the entry process into adult life.

It is worth mentioning that the difficulties young people encounter when entering the labor market also have consequences for their access to “full-fledged status as a citizen, as conferred by their enrollment in the wage society” (ROCHA-DE-OLIVEIRA and PICCININI, 2012a, p. 68), based on the understanding of professional insertion as a process, that is also historically situated and marked by the social context in which it is inserted (DUBAR, 2001). For Dubar (2001), to say that the term professional insertion is socially constructed means that it is historically inscribed in a political and economic conjuncture, linked to an institutional architecture that expresses specific relations (between education, work, and compensation), submitted to the strategies of the actors, which are linked to biographical trajectories and, most of all, the social inequalities and academic performance of the students. This perspective allows us to see professional insertion as a concept that goes beyond the economic relation between supply and demand. Rocha-de-Oliveira and Piccinini (2012a) mention that the sociological approach allows the existence of diverse elements to be revealed that are linked to cultural and symbolic dimensions, which are not usually contemplated in statistical surveys.

In Brazil, research on the subject begins to proliferate at the beginning of the 21st century, made up primarily of empirical studies. Some authors focused on “[...] their analysis in the insertion-exclusion dichotomy [...],” while others focused “[...]their research on higher education graduates, considering insertion as a homogeneous process, experienced by all individuals [...]” (ROCHA-DE-OLIVEIRA and PICCININI, 2012a, p. 63). A new bibliographical survey carried out for this article showed that the situation in the field of study has changed little, with studies dispersed in several areas, such as education, economics, and administration, and most of them have not developed the concept of professional insertion. Although interest in young workers as study focus has grown recently, (examples include the works of OLIVEIRA and HONÓRIO, 2014; AMARAL and OLIVEIRA, 2017; FRANCO, MAGALHÃES and PAIVA, 2017; PAIVA, FUJIHARA and REIS, 2017; SOUZA, HELAL and PAIVA, 2017), there are still few works that seek to have a conceptual discussion regarding the process of entering the workforce.

With a deeper theoretical focus, the texts of Franzoi (2011) and Rocha-de-Oliveira and Piccinini (2012b) deserve special mention. In this essay we adopt Rocha-de-Oliveira and Piccinini’s (2012b, p. 49) concept of professional insertion, who define it as:

[...] an individual, collective, historical, and socially inscribed process. Individual because it relates to the experience of each subject in the work realm, their professional choices and career expectations. It is a collective process because it is experienced in a similar way by the same generation, or within professional groups. It is historical, as it develops over a period of the subject’s life, under the influence of elements that mark a certain moment in time and space, such as public policies, labor market, organization of the education system, human resources policies, and the “entrepreneurial” views regarding the relationship between education and work. It is inscribed in a given socioeconomic and cultural context, in which, in addition to the institutional elements, there is influence of the constructions and social representations that individuals develop in relation to this professional insertion.

The concept the paper presents seeks to articulate three dimensions: the first is individual and is linked to each social origin and labor trajectory, where representations about work and professional expectations will emerge; the second integrates institutional aspects, notably corporate action through people management policies and government policies focused on education and work; and finally, the contextual dimension that integrates social, economic, and political aspects of the historical formation of the labor market, as well as conjunctural elements (ROCHA-DE-OLIVEIRA, 2012).

Thus, to reflect on professional insertion it is necessary to consider the social elements that influence young people in the construction of their various professional trajectories. Therefore, we approach the sociological vision of professional insertion in order to bring new elements to analyze the phenomenon. That being said, the next topic discusses social class, connecting it to the concept of social mobility, which in turn is seen as a necessary way to deepen the understanding of professional insertion.

MOBILITY AND CLASS INSERTION

Studies regarding class and social mobility have been resurfacing in the international arena in the last several years, especially the works of Sam Friedman (FRIEDMAN, 2016; FRIEDMAN, O'BRIEN and LAURENSEN, 2017), supported by the theoretical basis of Pierre Bourdieu. The discussion on social class can be understood from different theoretical perspectives (ATKINSON, 2015), and is commonly associated with Marxist thought, which focuses on the vision of social antagonism between the holders of the means of production and those who sell their labor. However, other classic authors, such as Max Weber, and some contemporaries, such as Pierre Bourdieu, Camille Peugny, Sam Friedman and Will Atkinson, discuss the theme from different epistemological approaches.

For Peugny (2007), stratification and social mobility are inseparable concepts, since they are at the origin of contemporary social science theory, because they allow penetration to the heart of how societies are organized, since resources and positions are distributed in a socially unequal manner. For the author, despite the criteria that differentiate the social strata change over time, and according to the society to which we refer, the logic of stratification is preserved. However, social mobility as a field of research is recent, having been born during the 19th century and being rooted in western industrial societies, since previous social organizations did not systematically offer the possibility of social mobility, with social condition determined at birth and extended until death. Thus, social mobility, that is, the movement of people between different strata of society, only begins to be possible with the political and economic revolutions that occur throughout the 19th century (PEUGNY, 2007).

Pastore and Valle Silva (2000) postulate that studies about stratification and social mobility are rooted in Karl Marx and Max Weber, however, the first works on mobility with a representational empirical basis emerged only after World War II, with the development of data collection and analysis techniques. The work of David Glass in 1949 was pioneering, as was the work of Blau and Duncan in 1967, which was considered a great contribution to the contemporary social mobility studies, by launching new data analysis techniques by trajectory investigation. According to them, acquired characteristics, such as education, should predominate over attributed characteristics - such as social origin, ethnicity, birth region, and family - because selection criteria would be more universal in an industrial society (SCALON, 1999).

John H. Goldthorpe, together with other researchers at Oxford University in 1972, developed a scheme entitled Comparative Analysis of Social Mobility in Industrial Nations (CASMIN) (SCALON, 1999). Based on Marx and Weber, the CASMIN scheme relies on the distinction between two types of employment relationships: proprietors (employers and self-employed) and employees (with restricted employment contracts and contracts that delegate broad responsibility to employees). There is also the division between non-manual urban work and urban and rural manual work; however, it does not include variables such as education and income (RIBEIRO, 2006). This scheme is widely used in Brazil (RIBEIRO and SCALON, 2001; PERO, 2008; RIBEIRO, 2006, 2012, 2014), because it allows for international comparisons; however, it is considered insufficient in this study because labor market positions are considered unsatisfactory to understand the flows of social mobility.

Ganzeboom, De Graaf and Treiman (1992) developed the International Socioeconomic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) scale, assigning grades to 271 distinct occupation categories, based on occupational codes of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO 88). According to Flor, Laguardia and Campos (2014), this scale weighs socioeconomic characteristics - generally education and income - of the people inserted in a given occupation. Thus, this classification "[...] allows an analysis of the trajectory to determine the weight of the social characteristics and the stratification factors in the status obtaining process [...]" (FLOR, LAGUARDIA and CAMPOS, 2014, p. 1871). That way, the scale expands the range of social elements being analyzed in relation to the CASMIN scale, but does not consider other socioeconomic elements, which is why it is also considered insufficient in this article.

Since we understand the process of professional insertion as an important moment for social mobility in which we perceive possible social ascension opportunity inequalities, we believe that a reflection about social mobility based on Pierre Bourdieu and Jessé Souza's theories about social classes is the most adequate for analyzing the Brazilian socio-historical context.

Souza (2012) claims that both liberal economics and traditional Marxism perceive the structure of social classes from an economic perspective, the former linking social class to income and the later to their place in the production process. Such approaches do not contemplate “[...] the social, emotional, moral, and cultural factors and preconditions that are part of the income differential [...]” (SOUZA, 2012, p. 22). Since social mobility studies are fundamental for understanding the processes of inequality, according to Souza (2012, p. 23) hiding the non-economic factors disallows “[...] the two issues that effectively allow an ‘understanding’ of the social inequality phenomena: its genesis and its reproduction in time [...].” It could be said, according to Bourdieu (2009), that the position occupied by the subjects in a society relates to their dispositions (*habitus*), and that position will determine what capital this agent possesses (cultural, political, economic, etc.).

Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*, understood as “[...] a pre-reflexive form of introjection and bodily inscription of dispositions that condition a lifestyle and a specific world view [...]” enables a redefinition of class social, giving meaning to the notion of class *habitus*, which would be precisely the sharing of this individual *habitus*. Class is then perceived, not as the set of properties, but similar social practices (SOUZA, 2006, 57). Bourdieu (2015) states that a class is defined not only by its position in the relations of production - profession, income, level of education - “[...] but also by the ratio of the number of men and women corresponding to a given distribution in the geographical space [...],” which, for the author, is never neutral, and by “[...] a set of auxiliary characteristics which, as tacit requirements, can function as real principles of selection or exclusion without ever being formally enunciated [...],” such as age, sex, and social or ethnic origin (BOURDIEU, 2015, p. 97).

However, for the author, this set of characteristics is still not enough to define class, which depends on the structure of relations that is formed between all the characteristics. Thus, the author builds a systematic analysis that includes profession, educational lever, “[...] the available rates for the volume of different types of capital¹, as well as sex, age and residence [...]” (BOURDIEU, 2015, p. 515). In addition, overlapping the chart that he built with the aforementioned characteristics he calls *social positions*, Bourdieu (2015) builds a graph with the spaces of lifestyles, analyzing the expressed preferences, which he calls *tastes*. According to Souza (2006), for Bourdieu, taste is an “[...] aesthetic competence that is a generative element of social distinctions in advanced capitalism [...]” (SOUZA, 2006, p. 53)², acting as marker of class of class fractions.

Despite the similarity between Souza and Bourdieu’s ideas of class, the former makes an important transposition of Bourdieu’s theory to Brazilian historical and social reality. According to Souza (2006), Bourdieusian theory is too contextualized in the analysis of the French working class, and this prevents it from perceiving collective processes of moral learning that transcend the class barrier. According to the author, there is a transclassist consensus, which allows the sharing of what he calls the *primary habitus*, which will differentiate societies such as the French from the Brazilian and that is prior to the *class habitus*. It would be what differentiates the condition of citizen, which all French people possess, from the condition of vulnerable individuals and social groups that are considered “sub-citizens” in Brazilian society.

Finally, it is relevant to bring Souza’s criticism (2012) to the belief that all barriers of blood and origin existing in pre-modern societies have been overcome and that today only individual performance is what differentiates and classifies individuals, by pointing out the social preconditions necessary for individuals to achieve individual success, considering the social class and even the family from which the individual is born. This assertion is in line with Bourdieu and Passeron’s (2013) study of the reproduction of social inequalities perceived in the French school system, in which the authors analyze that the school reproduces the established order, reinforcing the relations of force present in society.

Thus, individual performance would not be sufficient to overcome class barriers, thus the expansion of the overall population volume enrolled in education is not the same as the democratization of education, thus equal educational opportunities for individuals from different classes is necessary. Having said that, the next topic associates the presented theories with the idea of professional insertion, seeking to propose an approach that takes into account Brazilian specificities for the understanding of this process.

¹ Here the author mentions social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital, which are concepts that can be resumed in Bourdieu (2009).

² Bourdieu includes the tastes and the cultural needs directly related to the educational level and family socialization (SOUZA, 2006).

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONCEPTS OF MOBILITY AND SOCIAL CLASS FOR A BRAZILIAN PROFESSIONAL INSERTION THEORY

The context that leads us to reflect on the process of professional insertion in Brazil is one where the discourse about the lack of skilled labor to fill open jobs prevails, while the precariousness of the work itself, youth unemployment, and the unprecedented expansion of access to higher education occurs simultaneously (ROCHA-DE-OLIVEIRA and PICCININI, 2012a; VOLKMER MARTINS and ROCHA-DE-OLIVEIRA, 2017).

Cardoso (2008) postulates that the process of transition between school/university and work is one of the processes that can reveal the deepest constitution of a society in terms of its structure of positions and opportunities that are open or closed to individuals. The way the social division of labor is organized confronts, on the one hand, the demands of the companies, and on the other hand, the preferences, aspirations, and qualifications of the individuals (CARDOSO, 2008). However, since the labor market from the perspective of a field in Bourdieu's terms (2001) is not a balance between supply and demand, it will also reflect its socio-historical structure.

Therefore, what interests us when studying professional insertion is not a numerical survey that shows only how the current entry of young people into the labor market has become more complex, but to understand what social-historical construction is behind this process. Thus, in order to advance conceptually about professional insertion, we believe that, in addition to an individual, collective, historical, and socially inscribed process (ROCHA-DE-OLIVEIRA and PICCININI, 2012a), it is a moment where it is possible to comprehend the social mobility of a society, which may or may not reproduce existing social inequalities.

In a scenario where the discourse that education is a driver of the individual's chances at insertion in the labor market grows (LEMOS, DUBEUX and PINTO, 2009), it is seen, in line with what Nicole-Drancourt and Roulleau-Berger argue (2001), as an investment that can lead young people to mobility and social advancement. The transition process between getting a higher education degree and entry into the work is the moment where it would be possible to verify the role of education and qualification in individual social mobility, and if there are other elements, besides education, that would influence this mobility.

It is worth noting that in Brazil the discourse of equivalence between professional training and access to employment is still carried out among those with the more years of education, especially individuals belonging to the higher classes, contributing to the maintenance of the fallacy of the power of education as a guarantee of access to jobs (OLIVEIRA and SOUSA, 2013). However, research conducted in the first decade of the 21st century pointed out a significant number of more educated Brazilians who could not obtain placements corresponding to their qualifications (LEMOS, DUBEUX and PINTO, 2009). According to Sposito (2005), the changes that occurred in the last two decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century directly affected salaried labor, and thus modified the paths and contours for entry into adult life, which became less linear and more complex. Thus, schooling no longer guaranteed entry into the work world, which tended to occur mainly in relation to access to formal jobs.

If education does not guarantee professional insertion, what causes some young people to enter the market and others not? Why do some achieve more qualified entry than others³? We believe that the answer to these questions can be found in studies that consider differences in social class according to the terms set by Bourdieu (2015) and Souza (2012), revealing the situations of inequality and their reproduction over time.

Bourdieu's (1998) class properties, such as age, gender, and social or ethnic origin, are important for understanding individual differences in the insertion process and among different social groups, contributing to an alternative version of the argument that individual performance is what differentiates and classifies individuals. In addition, the distribution of capital as well as cultural and social class practices would also be responsible for determining access to Brazilian higher education, which is undergoing a hierarchical process, creating new differentiations between courses (undergraduate and technological, in-person and distance learning) and institutions, in order to reorganize the reproduction of inequalities according to the training received during Higher Education. This phenomenon has already occurred in France, where, although access to education

³For more on qualified and non-qualified insertion see Cordeiro (2002).

and the number of years of study increased, the best courses and institutions continued to be for the children of the upper classes (PEUGNY, 2014).

Also worth mentioning is the action of organizations for the production and reproduction of patterns of inequality, often using the discourse of equality and meritocracy (HELAL, 2015). In this sense, Cordeiro (2002) points out that the actions of organizations, through the policies of people management seeking to enter the labor market, have built different insertion processes, a qualifying one, where jobs with higher compensation, autonomy, and possibilities for professional growth predominate, and a non-qualifying one, marked by the predominance of temporary contracts, low salaries, low autonomy, and minimal opportunities to remain in the organization or develop professionally. As a typical example of qualifying insertion in Brazil, Rocha-de-Oliveira and Piccinini (2012b) point to the internship model that predominates in business administration.

Thus, professional insertion would need to be analyzed as a process where the reproduction of inequalities occurs not only upon exiting Higher Education, but in access to the different stages of formal education, culminating in differences of opportunity to access the labor market and in the way organizations contribute to the maintenance or transformation of the reality of the young workers who enter them. Therefore, considering the individual's class origin and the differences between the different classes in the insertion process could help us understand the different forms of professional insertion. Also, inequalities are reproduced throughout education, and are not limited to the moment of entry into higher education, since children from social backgrounds with little access to economic and cultural capital are, from the beginning of their trajectory, at a disadvantage compared to others (PEUGNY, 2014).

Reinforcing this argument, Peugny (2014) presents the glorification of merit as a consequence of social invisibility, since the denial of social antagonisms allows each person to be held accountable for his choices, successes and failures as an individual. Such accountability remains unfair, despite the reduction of quantitative inequalities, because qualitative inequalities are maintained, since access to education is broadened, but not everyone has access to the same types of diplomas and professional careers (PEUGNY, 2014). Perpetuating forms of segregation in the labor market. In a study carried out in France in 2013 with higher education graduates of 2010, children of parents who are in management, exercising control or supervision, with higher salaries, 62% were found to have completed at least a bachelor degree; compared to only 25% of children from working class families. As far as the type of diploma is concerned, while 49% of those in business schools, which give access to the best jobs, are children of parents from the higher professional categories, only 5% of the children of workers have access to this type of degree. In addition to the socio-occupational status, the survey also revealed inequalities between the children of native French and the children of foreigners, in relation to the place of residence during Higher Education and the diploma of the parents (CÉREQ, 2014).

Although the French social reality is distinct from the Brazilian reality, these data point out that it is necessary to turn our attention to the social origin of individuals - which this article suggests should be carried out through a discussion about the social class to which the young people belong - so that we may understand their trajectories of professional insertion and possibilities of social mobility. Chan and Boliver (2013) reinforce this argument, showing that the occupied position is related to the social origin of individuals, which is a strong determinant of social destinies. Therefore, although French studies point out some social elements regarding professional insertion, such as gender, nationality, level of education, and parental activity, we believe that there are other elements, based on the Brazilian specificities and the works of Bourdieu (2015) and Souza (2012) that should be addressed, such as: type of educational institution (public/private), work/studies reconciliation, age, race, region of origin, tastes, different types of capital (social, cultural, economic), and religious behavior. The mobilization of class characteristics can help understand the differences between the processes of professional insertion experienced by young people, as well as intergenerational social mobility, adopting the observation of Masson and Suteau (2010) that there is a conjunction of various elements that combine to determine the influence of education on professional trajectories.

In addition, Beaud (2014) calls attention to the importance of considering the historical and political context in which social mobility and job placement are analyzed, for they influence aspects such as the relationship between educational institutions and the labor market (MASSON and SUTEAU, 2010). This emphasizes Souza's (2006) argument that, in addition to class differences, it is necessary to pay attention to the collective processes of moral learning that transcend them, such as the question of race in Brazil and how it influences the different Brazilian social classes, since it crosses the idea of class, and is part of the history and origin of the country.

The aforementioned factors are important in that they allow reflection on aspects other than education that can influence the process of professional insertion. This can allow the questioning of the recent expansion in Brazilian Higher Education as an effective process of educational democratization that can offer equal opportunities to young people of different social origins. In addition, one can perceive the need to think about public education policies that take into account the diversity existing among students and that allow a closer approximation between education and the labor market, making it possible to reduce of inequalities in access to social and cultural capital.

CONCLUSIONS

The expansion of higher education in Brazil, especially in the last decade, and the deepening of the difficulties encountered by young graduates of this level of education upon entering the labor market, indicate the need to expand studies regarding professional insertion in Brazil. Despite a growing number of studies about young workers (OLIVEIRA and HONÓRIO, 2014; AMARAL and OLIVEIRA, 2017; FRANCO, MAGALHÃES and PAIVA, 2017; PAIVA, FUJIHARA and REIS, 2017; SOUZA, HELAL and PAIVA, 2017, among others), there is still a need to go into greater theoretical depth regarding professional insertion in the domestic context, producing a national appropriation of the construct, which could help with understanding the socioeconomic, historical and cultural specificities of Brazil.

Thus, this article sought to contribute to the theoretical production in the field of professional insertion, integrating the notions of mobility and social class in order to assist in the construction of a theory of professional insertion that takes into account the peculiarities of the Brazilian context. For this, we sought to articulate the insertion construction (DUBAR, 2001) and social class and mobility (BOURDIEU, 2015; PEUGNY, 2014), with the discussion carried out by Brazilian authors in these fields. Thus, we highlight the contributions of Rocha-de-Oliveira and Piccinini (2012a) and Lemos, Dubeux and Pinto (2009) to the formation of a theory of professional insertion that contemplates the Brazilian reality, and the works of Souza (2012) and Helal (2015) in the discussion of how the idea of social class can reveal the nature of this context, and in addition to the social representations of individuals, expose the *habitus* of classes that can interfere in the process.

Therefore, despite the discourse that promotes the lengthening of education as a way of improving professional insertion, it is necessary to discuss other elements that allow some individuals more qualified insertion (CORDEIRO, 2002) than others, even with access to the same educational level. This point of view is essential for the meritocracy discourse regarding access to the labor market to be deconstructed, revealing the social reproduction and opportunity inequality that is often hidden to justify merit.

As a research agenda, we suggest future studies address:

- a) The expansion and diversification of Higher Education access in Brazil based in the social origin and social mobility opportunities;
- b) The role of organizations in the formation of different insertion paths;
- c) The process of professional insertion in different areas, based on class and social origin of the different young people participating;
- d) The problematization of the meritocratic discourse in Brazilian society;
- e) As intersectionalities of social origin, race, gender, sexual orientation are articulated in the process of professional insertion, leading to the production of strata of difference and segregation.

We believe that in order to achieve this research agenda, it is necessary to use different methodological resources. In order to analyze the effects of the diversification and expansion of Higher Education in the process of professional insertion and social mobility (a) and the role of organizations (b), quantitative longitudinal studies are important so that the evolution of the topic can be monitored over time. In order to understand the process of insertion in different areas (c), problematize the discourse of meritocracy (d), and articulate the discussion about intersectionalities (e), in depth qualitative studies are needed, such as life histories (Bertaux 1980), narratives (RIESSMANN, 2000), or sociological portraits (LAHIRE, 2004). Thus, greater empirical depth of the topic requires different methodological approaches both to produce numerical data and to better understand the particularities experienced in the insertion process.

We also suggest the intersectionality of the meritocracy discourse with one that deals with inclusion, like the text by Franco, Magalhães, Paiva et al. (2017), so as to look beyond the insertion of young people, to the place they occupy in the organizational context based on their social origin. In addition, the meritocratic discourse can also dialogue with studies like Lima and Helal (2016), which addresses social capital linked to meritocracy to understand the rise of public servants to positions of leadership, so as to also bring to the discussion the existence of the political dispute within the organizations.

Finally, we see as the possibility of advancing the theme through other theoretical studies, as well as empirical studies that look and the experiences of the different social groups and their trajectories. We believe that this is an initial step towards building a theory of professional insertion that takes into account Brazilian specificities and requires other theoretical and empirical studies, as well as frequent discussions about the different youths that are part of the country, and the inequalities that are being reproduced and hidden in the process of higher education access and transition to the labor market.

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