














Experience Report

A social occupational therapy research/intervention experience aimed at providing active and democratic care to young students in the post-pandemic context

Uma experiência de pesquisa/intervenção da terapia ocupacional social para um cuidado ativo e democrático a jovens estudantes no contexto pós-pandêmico

Roseli Esquerdo Lopes^a , Beatriz Prado Pereira^b , Livia Celegati Pan^a , Rafael Garcia Barreiro^c , Marina Jorge da Silva^a , Ana Paula Serrata Malfitano^a , Magno Nunes Farias^c , Iara Falleiros Braga^b , Gisele Gonzalez Ito^a , Stéphanhy Conceição Correia Alves Guedes Reis^{a,d} , Bruna Carolina Silva dos Reis^a , Edna Diniz dos Santos^a , Patrícia Leme de Oliveira Borba^e 

^aUniversidade Federal de São Carlos – UFSCar, São Carlos, SP, Brasil.

^bUniversidade Federal da Paraíba – UFPB, João Pessoa, PB, Brasil.

^cUniversidade de Brasília – UnB, Brasília, DF, Brasil.

^dUniversidade Federal de Sergipe – UFS, Lagarto, SE, Brasil.

^eUniversidade Federal de São Paulo – UNIFESP, Santos, SP, Brasil.

How to cite: Lopes, R. E., Pereira, B. P., Pan, L. C., Barreiro, R. G., Silva, M. J., Malfitano, A. P. S., Farias, M. N., Braga, I. F., Ito, G. G., Reis, S. C. C. A. G., Reis, B. C. S., Santos, E. D., & Borba, P. L. O. (2024). A social occupational therapy research/intervention experience aimed at providing active and democratic care to young students in the post-pandemic context. *Cadernos Brasileiros de Terapia Ocupacional*, 32, e3748. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2526-8910.ctoRE288637482>

Abstract

The CoVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many issues insufficiently addressed by Brazil's social public policies. School dropout is one such issue, disproportionately affecting young people from working-class backgrounds, especially those who are the poor, Black, and peripheral populations, requiring the shared responsibility of various sectors and social actors. The research/intervention experience focused on the explanatory frameworks contributing to the occurrence and persistence of school dropout and/or withdrawal, as well as understanding and seeking to overcome the obstacles preventing young people from returning to or staying in school. An interinstitutional team, comprising researchers affiliated with the Metuia Network – Social Occupational Therapy, along with young university and high-school students, has been conducting this research/intervention in the cities of São Carlos and Santos (SP), João Pessoa (PB), Petrolina (PE), Brasília/Ceilândia (DF), and Simão Dias (SE). Based on participatory action research and social

Received on Jan. 24, 2024; 1st Revision on Feb. 14, 2024; Accepted on May 23, 2024.



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

occupational therapy, young university students and young researchers in their schools and/or communities have been individually and territorially following up other young people who are out of school. By incorporating additional methodological strategies, such as questionnaires, photovoice, interviews, expert panels, domestic and international seminars, and expanding the concept of “active search,” which has been required of education professionals, the aim is to provide active and democratic care, ensuring shared responsibility among all those who form the social support network for young people in their territories. This text aims to share this experience, from its inception to the questions arising from its first two years.

Keywords: Youth, Education, School Dropout, Social Network Support, Community.

Resumo

A pandemia de CoVID-19 agravou muitas problemáticas não suficientemente enfrentadas pelas políticas públicas sociais do Brasil. A evasão escolar é uma delas e afeta desproporcionalmente jovens das classes populares, em especial aqueles que são os pobres, negros e periféricos, demandando corresponsabilidade de diferentes setores e atores sociais. A experiência da pesquisa/intervenção da qual decorre este texto voltou-se para as matrizes explicativas que incidiram e permanecem incidindo na ocorrência da evasão e/ou desistência escolar, além da compreensão e busca da superação dos motivos impeditivos do retorno ou da permanência do jovem à/na escola. Uma equipe interinstitucional formada por pesquisadores vinculados à Rede Metuia – Terapia Ocupacional Social, composta também por jovens universitários e jovens estudantes do Ensino Médio, vem desenvolvendo esta pesquisa/intervenção nas cidades de São Carlos e Santos (SP), João Pessoa (PB), Petrolina (PE), Brasília/Ceilândia (DF) e Simão Dias (SE). Para tanto, tendo como base a pesquisa-participante e a terapia ocupacional social, jovens universitários e jovens pesquisadores em suas escolas e/ou comunidades têm acompanhado, de forma singular e territorial, outros jovens que estão fora da escola. Agregando-se outras estratégias metodológicas, tais como questionários, *photovoice*, entrevistas, painel de especialistas, seminários locais e internacionais, bem como ampliando-se a ideia da “busca ativa”, que tem sido exigida dos profissionais da educação, pretende-se um cuidado ativo e democrático, corresponsabilizando todos que compõem a rede social de suporte dos jovens em seus territórios. Trata-se aqui de compartilhar essa experiência desde sua construção aos questionamentos decorrentes dos seus dois primeiros anos.

Palavras-chave: Juventudes, Educação, Evasão Escolar, Rede Social de Suporte, Comunidade.

Introduction

In December 2023, we reached the tragic milestone of 708,638 deaths from CoVID-19 in Brazil (Brasil, 2024a), considering that, from 2021, with vaccination throughout the country, we saw a drastic reduction in the number of deaths resulting from this

disease. Nevertheless, we watched, hopelessly, the worsening of a series of social and political problems that were present before the pandemic.

We could present a list of issues that have affected our country, its population, and ourselves; however, speaking more specifically about some of them is part of reading the immediate reality, in connection with aspects of our own history, both individual and collective, from the place we occupy as researcher-educators in the fields of occupational therapy and education, working alongside schools and communities.

This position has been the result of fruitful contact for over 20 years, given a history dedicated to university outreach, teaching, and scientific research practices primarily aimed at the youth. In community actions, we have sought strategies that address inequalities, share and occupy public spaces, and discuss access to social resources and goods. At the interface with education, our priority has been the youth *in and/or in partnership with* public schools.

In this context, since the beginning of the pandemic in Brazil in March 2020, working together with our partners—young people, teachers, and managers—we have maintained our intervention and research activities through various remote and distance methods. Starting in the second half of 2021, we resumed in-person contacts. Thus, we were able to observe and share the challenges faced by schools that had to adapt to the reality imposed by the pandemic, among which the worsening of an event that, however, comprises it. This event predates the pandemic and has been worsening in the years that followed it: school dropout and/or abandonment.

More than a year after the pandemic onset (June 2021), slightly over 10% of the young people were engaged in activities in the virtual environment of the schools with which we maintain partnerships in the cities of São Carlos/SP, Santos/SP, João Pessoa/PB, Petrolina/PE, and Ceilândia/DF ¹. We repeatedly received a similar set of questions from different managers: How can you help us bring young people back to school? How to effectively seek their return to in-person classes? What are the obstacles/impediments to their return and how can we overcome them?

This set of questions mobilized part of the researchers from the Metuia Network – Social Occupational Therapy, which comprises the “Citizenship, Social Action, Education, and Occupational Therapy” Research Group, with great participation from members of its research line “School, Occupational Therapy, and Radical Inclusion,” to build a project focused on equity, diversity, and reducing inequalities in education.

The section presented here aims to share how the implementation of this thematic and multicentric research/intervention project ² occurred, involving teachers, researchers, undergraduate and graduate students, and young people from schools and communities in six cities across three Brazilian regions, to compose and develop an empirical field around the issues of school dropout/abandonment and the difficulty of staying in school for young people in public high schools (*Ensino Médio*).

¹ In 2020, the country recorded 47.9 million students in Basic Education, with 38.7 million in public schools (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira, 2021). Regarding the responses of Basic Education to the pandemic, the data reaffirmed the significant inequality between public and private school systems; connectivity for poorer students was one of the greatest obstacles to continuing their studies. Free Internet provision reached less than 7% of public schools (6.6%). However, the Federal Government resorted to the courts to avoid complying with the law that mandated investments to provide Internet access to public school students and teachers (Saldaña, 2021a).

² Approved by Opinion no. 5.230.833.

CoVID-19 pandemic and school dropout: the worsening of a historical problem

Dropout, abandonment, school failure. Various ways to name the same phenomenon: the non-belonging of a significant portion of Brazilian youth to school, as well as a school that does not form a network of social support for these young people.

School dropout (the young person dropping out of school and the school giving up on the young person), the term we opted for, is an old and well-studied phenomenon in the educational field that affects, especially, populations that do not meet the expectations of good school performance, revealing a “complex, dynamic, and cumulative process of student disengagement from school life” (Dore & Lüscher, 2011, p. 777). It is emphasized that the agency throughout this process is not solely and exclusively on the young person, but involves many other actors, from the proper funding of public schools, questions about the meaning of school for young people, the pedagogical principles that should be assumed by educational policies and guidelines, the obligation or not of high school in Brazil, the need to participate in domestic/family tasks, to income generation (Rumberger, 2006; Cury & Ferreira, 2010; Nosella, 2016; Dore & Lüscher, 2011, Ramos, 2021; Reis & Lopes, 2023).

Since 2020, this problem, which greatly affects young people from the working strata who should be enrolled in high school in Brazil, has generated a larger number of dropouts. Common explanations for this phenomenon revolve around young people’s disinterest in studying, ignoring the many factors that impede their access and permanence in the educational system, as well as more in-depth understandings of youth sociability.

The difficulties of access and permanence in the educational system are historical among us. Before the pandemic, the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) showed that 20.2% of young people aged 14 to 29 did not complete any stage of schooling, either by dropping out or by never having attended school. In elementary school (*Ensino Fundamental*), the rates were more positive, with 99.7% of children and adolescents aged 6 to 14 enrolled; this number drops to 89.2% in high school for those aged 15 to 17 (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2020). This shows that even before the pandemic, there was already a large contingent of young people who did not reach high school, revealing that the dropout process was already an uncomfortable and present part of this system.

With the CoVID-19 pandemic, the living conditions of the population were worsened by measures to contain its spread, including guidelines for social distancing and restricted movement. In a context of intensified vulnerabilities due to pre-existing economic, social, and political crises, but exacerbated by the pandemic, the issues of vulnerable groups—notably poor youth, the majority of whom are Black and from urban peripheries—were magnified (Comissão Econômica para a América Latina e o Caribe, 2020; Farias & Leite Junior, 2021), highlighting those related to access to education and staying in school.

To prevent the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, an immediate measure was the closure of schools; for the first time since the Spanish Flu pandemic in the early 20th century, as a hallmark of our generation, we experienced the unprecedented: schools closed for months³.

³ In Brazil, only 5% of public schools returned to in-person classes in 2020; in the private network, this percentage was 29% (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira, 2021).

According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Brazil, 5.5 million children and adolescents aged 6 to 17 were without school activities or out of school by the end of 2020 (Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Infância, 2021). As reported by Datafolha research institute, in Brazil, during the same period, 8.4% of students from elementary to postgraduate levels abandoned their studies, with the main reason cited being the interruption of in-person classes; regarding the intention to return, 17.4% of elementary school students had no interest, a rate that increased to 26% among high school students (Saldaña, 2021b). In 2021, there was a decline in the number of students approved in all administrative spheres compared to 2020; the high school dropout rate reached 5.0% in 2021 (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira, 2022). In 2022, 1100 adolescents and young people aged 11 to 19 across the country were interviewed, and 11% indicated they were not attending school. The 9th grade of elementary school had the highest level (16%), indicating that many adolescents/young people did not even reach high school (Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Infância, 2022). This “pandemic of abandonment” (Lencastre, 2021), therefore, remains a pressing issue among us.

Thus, the guideline is for public school managers to work on what is called “active search,” with phone calls and home visits to students who are not attending school, primarily to promote their return.

This proposition connects to community action strategies, aimed at social cohesion that shares the value of school for everyone, in a protection network that identifies needs in combination with collective protection by the community itself. These strategies have been described in the literature regarding health actions related to the pandemic, with the work of community agents, within the scope of Primary Care in Brazil (Latta et al., 2020) and in other countries, such as the United Kingdom (Haines et al., 2020). However, the potential of networked actions from the education sector (Pereira et al., 2021b), as well as their ability to integrate actions with communities in their collective and protective dimensions, has been little explored.

We still lack resources to measure school dropout among young people and how this process unfolded during the most intense years of the pandemic, especially since, between 2020 and 2021, the guidance in public schools was non-failure and automatic re-enrollment, given the fragility and lack of control over teaching-learning processes. However, we believe that even in this post-pandemic context in Brazil, strategies to reduce educational inequalities intensified by the spread of SARS-CoV-2 need to be thought of at the territorial level where one lives and studies, connecting local actors and the entire school community.

In this direction, we proposed a research-intervention that has been ongoing since the end of 2021, aiming to configure contributions from social occupational therapy, in its interface with the school and with the community, to mitigate the impacts of school dropout, providing support for actions that promote the return and permanence of young people in school.

Social occupational therapy: a care proposal for radical inclusive education

In the journey of the Metuia Network, interfaces with the area of Education focusing on Public Schools and Youth have been prioritized, outlining reflections, debates, and

propositions that connect them to social issues (Lopes & Borba, 2022a, 2022b). In this proposal, we bring together four of its seven active centers: Metuia/UFSCar, Metuia/Unifesp, Metuia/UFPB, and Metuia-Cerrado, stemming from the history of partnership these centers have with young people, public schools, and community actions; in 2023, we began counting on the participation of a team from a center still in formation at the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS) in Simão Dias/SE.

In this context, taking the foundations of social occupational therapy and the sociology of education, we have debated and fostered strategies, resources, and technologies for care actions in their social dimension in different contexts, highlighting schools and communities. It involves understanding the everyday life of individuals critically and comprehensively, beyond the health-disease dichotomy, understanding care actions as an expression of social support and an attribute of collective life (Contatore et al., 2017), thus enabling its articulation from the social and cultural universe of individuals.

Taking the school as essential in forming a social support network for young people from the working classes (Lopes et al., 2008, 2011, 2014), we argue that the dimension of care production in social occupational therapy action through Individual and Territorial Follow-ups (Lopes et al., 2014; Pan et al., 2022)—that is, proximity to the individual, grasping their demands for an intervention that combines different resources, formal and informal, in their territory—can contribute to the “active search” to be conducted by schools, aiming to act on school dropout rates.

Although the concept of care lacks consensus in the literature (Tronto, 2007) and is usually linked to the health field, sociological studies show that it is not restricted to it, requiring us to understand care from a “socio-logical” perspective (Contatore et al., 2017, p. 553), something inherent to the human condition, that permeates the management of affective, social, cultural, and political relationships. This shifts the focus from biomedical, therapeutic actions, broadening the concept and applying it to sectors such as social and educational. It starts from a definition of providing support and backing for collective life, acting on the establishment of principles referred to in a participatory and more democratic society (Tronto, 2007), implying an “imagination about caring, solidarity around care, and the willingness to be with others” as “constitutive of actions to maintain life” (Contatore et al., 2017, p. 560).

Based on these principles, social occupational therapy action with young people from the working classes, generally poor, Black, and from the peripheries, aims to produce a transitive individual and collective care that is intended to be democratic and democratizing (Pan, 2019). This action comprises the recognition of sociocultural, economic, affective, and alterity relationships and the maintenance of human life; the possibility of occupational-therapeutic action that combines individual and collective actions related to concrete everyday life; the structuring of institutional and extra-institutional actions, in this case in school and the community; not pathologizing social phenomena through an approach that recognizes contradictions in them. Thus, the dimension of solidarity, interdependence, and access to social goods and rights, moving away from an iatrogenic apprehension of life’s movements, strongly connected to self- and mutual respect (Sennett, 2004), defines care in social occupational therapy.

Specifically in proposals *in* and *in partnership with* public schools, it involves an approach that moves from outside to inside and from inside to outside is suggested, intertwining actions that deal with poor youth and their possible social support networks. This care, fostered based

on the centrality of the public school in the social fabric, effecting an active and democratic. Active in the sense of traversing the territories and life spaces of individuals with them, meeting the *other* to create and/or expand spaces for dialogue, in a context marked by the logics of school dropout, with socio-historical aspects that parameterize the inequalities of Brazilian society; but also conjunctural, like the pandemic, and *democratic*, placing at the center of the proposal the participation of everyone, horizontally, to seek alternatives to overcome challenges, especially those experienced by youth. In summary, a *ParticipActive* care.

Implementing this care requires a territorial dimension, action in life spaces, in the community, in its listening, participation, and articulation. Savegnago (2018) points to the territorial dimension as central in the construction of young people's trajectories, for instance, characterizing the possibilities of access to services, jobs/income, and cultural/educational goods, the quality of these services, and the opportunities for socialization and development of a sense of belonging, also *with* and *from* them. From this perspective, the community territorial perspective is taken as a way to broaden the understanding of school dropout – a phenomenon of local/community dimensions and not just individual or, at most, family.

Therefore, the *active* and *democratic* care proposed in this study affirms the importance of radical inclusive education, which problematizes the school inclusion of all individuals (Lopes & Borba, 2022b), so that “strategies and technologies for the radical inclusion process can be developed and created, for those who are daily expelled from schools and whom the school has not managed to welcome and teach” (Pereira et al., 2021a, p. 19). This involves community and school articulations with young people and their families, meaning the management of individuals, especially in a context marked by vulnerabilities inescapably exposed by the pandemic.

Study design and implementation of the empirical field

Our main aim was to develop a proposal that, based on a participatory approach, would seek, through concrete actions, to contribute to reduce school dropout and/or foster the return of young people to school, operationalizing an “active search,” expected from education professionals through active and democratic care involving the participation of young people. Thus, we implemented a participatory research/intervention that, over the past two years, brought together a set of methods aimed at conducting and recording longitudinal follow-ups of young people who are struggling to stay in school and/or are out of school. At the center of the proposal was/is the construction of care that actively involves these young students.

The teams were composed of six researchers and one researcher from the Metuia Network in those six different cities, 37 young university students from the courses of occupational therapy, social work, and educational psychology from the five universities, four doctoral students in the fields of education and occupational therapy, and 33 young researchers, students from high schools in each city and/or alumni and community residents, participating in all phases of the work. Each team had/has at least one coordinating researcher for the actions in their site, two young university students, and two young researchers, except for the team in Petrolina/PE, which did not include university students.

Partnerships with each of the six schools for this research/intervention were established from the end of 2021 to mid-2022, and in the case of Simão Dias/SE, at the beginning of 2023.

The involvement of young university students, mostly women, came through participation in university outreach projects and/or undergraduate research and final projects, internships, and theoretical-practical courses. For these young people, adaptation to the academic research setting happened progressively with each meeting, both in-person and online, with local and general groups.

The selection of high school students, called young researchers, was specific to each site. This partnership aimed to strengthen existing bonds, facilitate communication with the school and students, and provide a closer view of the reality of the young people targeted by the research/intervention actions. It was about integrating the young researchers from the school’s territory into the team, by valuing their knowledge about the school and the issues that young people face regarding the difficulty of staying in and completing high school, incorporating their experiences as young people who study or studied in these schools.

Each site had a local in-person schedule, and from April 2022, with the minimum teams defined, general online meetings began to take place for training on the research/intervention theme, as well as on the research and its strategies, in addition to exchanges between university and high school students – full of accents, words, and unique ways of being and doing from each region/city.

This training in eight meetings is summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. Themes for team training by pre-field meetings.

Meetings		Themes
1	General/Virtual	- Presentation of the study proposal and the concept of “Active and Democratic Care” - Discussion on science and shared knowledge production and research ethics
2	Individual/In-person	- Presentation of initial ideas and work for the development of research instruments
3	General/Virtual	- Individual and Territorial Follow-ups and Field Notes
4	Individual/In-person	- Dialogues, debates, and reflections on the themes from prior readings
5	General/Virtual	- Photovoice, everyday life, and ways of living
6	Individual/In-person	- Activity Workshops: Photos of us, our everyday lives, and our way of living
7	General/Virtual	- Presentation of the initial data collection instrument (questionnaire) proposal and joint review of questions
8	General/Virtual	- Finalization of the questionnaire proposal - Joint assessment of the process

The meetings were mediated and conducted by the research professors, with support and the use of various visual resources (virtual and interactive games) and theoretical discussion, considering the prior reading of indicated texts.

With the conditions gathered for effective field entry, the fieldwork was organized into four phases and distinct strategies for promoting active and democratic care. These strategies included: (1) conducting individual and territorial follow-ups: a social technology that allows being among young people in the territories where they live to provide “a more real perception and interaction of the everyday life and context of individuals, interconnecting their histories

and paths, their current situation and their network of relationships” (Lopes et al., 2014, p. 597); (2) mapping the territories; (3) constructing the photovoice: capturing everyday realities using photography (Meirinho, 2017); (4) administering questionnaires; (5) interviews; (6) field notes; (7) literature review; and (8) documentary research.

Table 2 schematically presents each phase of the research/intervention and the activities that comprised them.

Table 2. Phases of fieldwork in research/intervention by activities.

Phases	Activities	Description
I - Arrival in the territory	Survey in schools of dropout students and/or those having difficulty staying	Team seeks to obtain enrollment and attendance data from school management and teachers
	Approaching the youth to be monitored	Youth from the communities contact students they know who are out of school to invite them to participate
	Administering questionnaires to contacted youth who are out of school	University and school students will apply questionnaires to youth who are out of school, with responses being given online or in person within the community
	Individual and Territorial Follow-up	Starting the follow-up of youth who are out of school
	Photovoice: “Spaces and Means for Studying”	Taking photographs of their spaces and ways of daily studying by both in-school and out-of-school youth
	Mapping the territory	Surveying formal services (social assistance, culture, education, justice, health, and NGOs) and informal services (social movements, collectives, public spaces) in the community
	In-depth interviews with managers and teachers	Interviews with managers and teachers about school dropout
	Virtual meeting of young researchers	Creating a network for exchanging experiences among young researchers about the research field and the project theme
II - Understanding dropout and barriers to returning and staying in school: including families	Continuation of Individual and Territorial Follow-up	Continuing the follow-up of youth who are out of school
	Photovoice: “Study, School, and Family”	Taking photographs with the theme: family compositions and support for school activities by both in-school and out-of-school youth
	Understanding family compositions and expectations	Interviews with the families of youth who are not in school
	Virtual meeting of young researchers	Creating a network for exchanging experiences among young researchers about the research field and the project theme
III - Understanding dropout and barriers to returning and staying in school: community partnerships	Continuation of Individual and Territorial Follow-up	Continuing the follow-up of youth who are out of school
	Photovoice: “More Spaces and Ways for Studying”	Taking photographs with the theme of the need for “spaces for studying” by both in-school and out-of-school youth
	Identifying and meeting community leaders and representatives of sectoral services	Interviews with representatives of sectoral services in the school territory and community leaders
	Virtual meeting of young researchers	Creating a network for exchanging experiences among young researchers about the research field and the project theme
IV - Expanding social support networks	Continuation and completion of Individual and Territorial Follow-up	Continuing the follow-up of youth who are out of school
	Photovoice: “Everyday Lives and Ways of Living”	Taking photographs of their everyday lives by both in-school and out-of-school youth
	Understanding assistance networks	Mapping social, formal, and informal supports, as well as the components of the assistance networks for youth who are out of school
	Evaluation with participating youth	Administering a second questionnaire to followed up youth in the communities
	Interviews with community young researchers	Conducting interviews with young researchers from the communities
	Virtual meeting of young researchers	Creating a network for exchanging experiences among young researchers about the research field and the project theme

Generally, phases I and II took place in the first year (2022) of the study execution, whereas phases III and IV occurred in the second year (2023), with developments still ongoing in 2024. In November 2022, at UFSCar, the teams met in a hybrid manner (with members present from all of them, including young high school researchers, young university students, and professors/researchers) to report their results and challenges regarding the year 2022 and to discuss and plan for the year 2023.

At the end of phase IV, a “Panel of Experts” was held with researchers from the areas of occupational therapy, education, and youth studies at the II “Occupational Therapy, Education, and Youth: knowing the practices and recognizing knowledge” International Meeting ⁴, which gathered occupational therapists involved with the education sector and community-based actions to exchange experiences and theoretical-methodological discussions worldwide on ways of producing care, focusing on the young population, their permanence in school, and completion of their Basic Education. Concurrently with this event, the exhibition “*Ninguém de Fora*” (“Nobody Left Out”) occurred featuring photos chosen by the teams and images worked on with photovoice. As shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3 below:



Figure 1. To find out who wants to return.



Figure 2. To find those who are missing.

⁴ The first edition of this event occurred in December 2019 supported by the Office of Outreach Activities at UFSCar; this second edition was supported by CAPES, CNPq, and UFSCar’s Graduate Programs in Occupational Therapy (PPGTO) and Education (PPGE).



Figure 3. It's difficult to want to stay.

Contributions to occupational therapy: what we can share and say with this experience

Initially, we highlight the challenge of conducting a multicentric research proposal by a team of researchers from the field of occupational therapy in Brazil. We faced significant obstacles in our own institutions, especially concerning interaction with the *Plataforma Brasil*⁵. The diversity of procedures adopted in each institution, coupled with the limited dialogue with the platform and its operators, resulted in complex negotiations in two of these institutions. We are left with the question: how to proceed when one of the partner universities intends to conduct the process independently of what is actually provided by the platform, from the host institution? Among researchers in our field, this is not well-known or debated, and we lack experience. The study was duly approved, but not without disruptions in this conversation.

In a distinct aspect, something that has been reported in the field—participatory/interventionist research, marking the commitment to understanding certain realities in a shareable way with those who experience them, integrating different forms of knowledge—has been experienced in a novel way through the composition involving high school students, both in schools and in communities. We sought ways to finance, albeit modestly⁶, this work/experimentation/experience among the 33 young student-researchers who agreed to be/learn/teach with us. These young people have been participatory and involved interlocutors in the production of instruments, data, discussions, and, fundamentally, in raising awareness among peers inside and outside school about the processes that lead to school dropout.

This connects with at least four problems faced by the teams, which we highlight below:

The difficulty of identifying who is out of school and who is struggling to stay there on a daily basis during the school year

Identifying young people in a situation of school dropout seemed simple, as the partner schools would provide us with this information, verified by 'non-continuation

⁵ A website developed by the Ministry of Health of Brazil to conduct the process of submission, analysis, and monitoring of research involving human subjects.

⁶ Through various scholarship programs, including self-financing.

enrollment' and 'non-attendance'. We realized the operational fragility of schools for this identification: inconsistency of records, malleability of criteria, as well as the scarcity of resources to seek and monitor students in these situations. Although schools are parameterized by the number of students for budget and staff allocations, these figures were elusive; another parameter is the performance of their students, as infrequent and 'dropout' students do not yield good results. To move forward in this aspect, it was crucial to talk and rely on the students, both in what they had to say about themselves and their peers (in a protected manner) in each classroom, and in the reality of the neighborhoods where the young researchers also lived/live.

The implementation of “full-time schools” and the immediate need for some “money”

Many states began to implement what was called the “New High School” (*Novo Ensino Médio*)⁷ only in 2022, with “full-time school” being a requirement.

The debate around this theme is intense, but undeniably, it is a public policy that requires conditions. During the data production process through questionnaires, interviews, and follow-ups, we repeatedly heard from the whole school community the discourse that the extended time in school is a ‘hindrance,’ especially its combination with work or vocational courses, which was sometimes pointed out as a justification for school dropout. At the same time, we encountered dissatisfaction from some young people – here, not only from those who dropped out or had low attendance but also from those who are regular attendees – if not with this school/education model, certainly with its operationalization, as they reported fatigue with the long hours, uninteresting classes, insufficient physical and human resources. Many referred to the disappointment with poorly maintained spaces, sometimes unclean, vacant classes due to a lack of teachers, absence of fans or air conditioning and without toilet paper, few tables for meals, lack of food and places to rest, closed libraries, etc. The aim is, by extending the school day, to ensure teaching-learning, spaces for creation, expression, and exercise of autonomy, among other promises and expectations (Cássio, 2022); however, the reality of the “school floor” was/is painful.

On one hand, we question this discourse from young people and their families about work; after all, what is the possible/available work for them? On the other hand, we wonder how to produce return and permanence—and this desire by young people—with schools in these conditions.

Studying is work (Nosella, 2016), a right, and a duty, whose condition must be provided to young people by the family, the State, and society, as a constitutional precept. Our society is not meeting this for most young students. The scholarship for high school permanence, implemented in some states and more recently by the current Federal Government⁸, is a condition. In our experience with young researchers and the

⁷ Provisional Measure no. 746, which instituted the “High School Reform,” was approved by Law no. 13.415 of 2017. With this reform, the national curriculum standard began to be defined by the Common National Curricular Base (BNCC), altering both its content with the introduction of “formative itineraries” and the distribution of the workload between mandatory and elective disciplines, establishing the autonomy of institutions to define the latter, in addition to extending the school day (Brasil, 2018). The discussions, criticisms, and controversies surrounding the New High School are numerous and very current, with Silva (2023), Piolli & Sala (2022), Reis & Lopes (2023), among many others, having publications on the subject.

⁸ In January 2024, for example, the federal program “*Pé de Meia*” (nest egg) was established (Brasil, 2024b), which provides for the payment of monthly and annual incentives to students from families registered with social assistance.

experience of some extra “money,” we could clearly perceive the affirmative power of this measure.

After all, is compulsory high school a desirable goal?

Many among us, students, researchers, and part of Brazilian society, have not realized that high school is not mandatory in Brazil (Cury & Ferreira, 2010). Constitutional Amendment No. 59, of 2009, provides that the State must offer school enrollment to an age group ranging from four to 17 years. Thus, a child must compulsorily enter preschool at four years old, follow in elementary school from six, and then stay in school until 17, regardless of the grade or stage of education. It is not necessarily about high school enrollment, given the enormous age-grade distortion present; moreover, according to the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA), elementary school is mandatory (Art. 101 - III). This measure, according to ECA, is only protective in nature, placing the responsibility more on parents or guardians. Thus, who ensures that young people remain in high school?

In contact with some young people, but mainly with their families, the impression is that they “have come far enough,” not seeing high school as an important stage for their education. This is not in question for young people from middle and upper classes in the country, being a matter for the working classes. We encounter resistance, struggle, and disbelief about whether this level of Basic Education is or should be mandatory for everyone. In Brazil, Basic Education is still not necessarily for everyone.

It was impactful to follow young people returning, redesigning dreams, expectations, young student-researchers in the final years of high school, themselves demanding support, follow-up that our experience also fostered among them, to be able to stay and move on to Higher Education and in producing resistance movements in their communities. It has also been equally impactful, however, to witness the school dropout of young people and schools giving up on young people.

Finally, it is emphasized that to produce research and knowledge, both in a theoretical and methodological dimension in academic and practical terms, in our area, it has been essential to establish partnerships – local, regional, national, and international, pluralizing the origins and academic status of the teams and our interlocutors, to add significant questions, data construction, frameworks, and experiences from different groups and institutions, to share analyses and broaden the reach of what we have postulated.

References

- Brasil. (2018). *Base Nacional Comum Curricular*. Brasília: Ministério da Educação.
- Brasil. (2024a). *Painel de casos de doença pelo coronavírus 2019 no Brasil*. Recuperado em 01 de junho 2024, de <https://covid.saude.gov.br/>
- Brasil. (2024b). *Programa Pé de Meia do Ministério da Educação*. Recuperado em 01 de junho 2024, de <https://www.gov.br/mec/pt-br/pe-de-meia>
- Cássio, F. (2022). A “expansão” da carga horária no novo ensino médio aprofunda desigualdades escolares no estado de São Paulo. *EccoS – Revista Científica*, (62), 1-17.

- Comissão Econômica para a América Latina e o Caribe - CEPAL. (2020). *América Latina y el Caribe ante la pandemia del COVID-19*. Recuperado em 01 de julho de 2020, de https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45337/6/S2000264_es.pdf
- Contatore, O. A., Malfitano, A. P. S., & Barros, N. F. (2017). Os cuidados em saúde: ontologia, hermenêutica e teleologia. *Interface: a Journal for and About Social Movements*, 21(62), 553-563.
- Cury, C. R. J., & Ferreira, L. A. M. (2010). Obrigatoriedade da educação das crianças e adolescentes: uma questão de oferta ou de efetivo atendimento? *Nuances: Estudos sobre Educação*, 17(18), 124-145.
- Dore, R., & Lüscher, A. Z. (2011). Permanência e evasão na educação técnica de nível médio em Minas Gerais. *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, 41(144), 770-789.
- Farias, M. N., & Leite Junior, J. D. (2021). Vulnerabilidade social e Covid-19: considerações com base na terapia ocupacional social. *Cadernos Brasileiros de Terapia Ocupacional*, 29, 1-13.
- Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Infância – UNICEF. (2021). *Cenário da Exclusão Escolar no Brasil: um alerta sobre os impactos da pandemia da COVID-19 na Educação*. Recuperado em 05 de janeiro de 2023, de <https://trajetoriaescolar.org.br>
- Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Infância – UNICEF. (2022). *Educação Brasileira em 2022: a voz de adolescentes*. Recuperado em 05 de janeiro de 2023, de <https://www.unicef.org>
- Haines, A., Barros, E. F., Berlin, A., Heymann, D., & Harris, M. (2020). National UK programme of community health workers for COVID-19 response. *Lancet*, 395(10231), 1173-1175.
- Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE. (2020). *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílio – PNAD*. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE.
- Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira – INEP. (2021). *Resposta educacional à pandemia de COVID-19 no Brasil*. Recuperado em 09 de julho de 2021, de <https://www.gov.br/inep/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/censo-escolar/divulgados-dados-sobre-impacto-da-pandemia-na-educacao>
- Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira – INEP. (2022). *Resultado da 2ª etapa do Censo Escolar 2021*. Recuperado em maio de 2022, de <https://www.gov.br/inep/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/censo-escolar/divulgado-resultado-da-2a-etapa-do-censo-escolar-2021>
- Latta, G., Wenham, C., Nunes, J., & Pimenta, D. N. (2020). Community health workers reveal COVID-19 disaster in Brazil. *Lancet*, 396(10248), 365-366.
- Lencastre, C. (2021). *'Pandemia' de abandono e evasão escolar*. Recuperado em 29 de junho de 2023, de <https://projetocolabora.com.br/ods4/pandemia-de-abandono-e-evasao-escolar>
- Lopes, R. E., & Borba, P. L. O. (2022b). A inclusão radical como diretriz para terapeutas ocupacionais na educação. *Revista Ocupación Humana*, 22(2), 202-214.
- Lopes, R. E., Adorno, R. C. F., Malfitano, A. P. S., Takeiti, B. A., Silva, C. R., & Borba, P. L. O. (2008). Juventude pobre, violência e cidadania. *Saúde e Sociedade*, 17(3), 63-76.
- Lopes, R. E., Borba, P. L. O., Trajber, N. K. A., Silva, C. R., & Cuel, B. T. (2011). Oficinas de atividades com jovens da escola pública: tecnologias sociais entre educação e terapia ocupacional. *Interface*, 15(36), 277-288.
- Lopes, R. E., Malfitano, A. P. S., Silva, C. R., & Borba, P. L. O. (2014). Recursos e tecnologias em terapia ocupacional social: ações com jovens pobres na cidade. *Cadernos Brasileiros de Terapia Ocupacional*, 22(3), 591-602.
- Lopes, R.E., & Borba, P.L.O. (2022a). *Terapia Ocupacional, Educação e Juventudes: conhecendo práticas e reconhecendo saberes*. São Carlos: EdUFSCar.
- Meirinho, D. (2017). O olhar por diferentes lentes: o photovoice enquanto método científico participativo. *Discursos Fotográficos*, 13(23), 261-290.
- Nosella, P. (2016). *A escola de Gramsci* (5. ed.). São Paulo: Cortez.
- Pan, L. C. (2019). *Entrelaçando pontos – de fora para dentro, de dentro para fora: ação e formação da terapia ocupacional social na escola pública* (Tese de doutorado). Universidade Federal de São Carlos, São Carlos.

- Pan, L. C., Borba, P. L. O., & Lopes, R. E. (2022). Recursos e metodologias para o trabalho de terapeutas ocupacionais na e em relação com a escola pública. In R. E. Lopes & P. L. O. Borba (Eds.), *Terapia Ocupacional, Educação e Juventudes: conhecendo práticas e reconhecendo saberes* (pp. 97-197). São Carlos: EdUFSCar.
- Pereira, B. P., Borba, P. L. O., & Lopes, R. E. (2021a). Terapia ocupacional e educação: as proposições de terapeutas ocupacionais na e para a escola no Brasil. *Cadernos Brasileiros de Terapia Ocupacional*, 29, 1-24.
- Pereira, R. M. R., Santos, J. F., & Freitas, C. R. (2021b). O papel da orientação educacional na articulação em rede: o caso Davi. *Revista de Educação, Ciência e Cultura*, 26(2), 1-14.
- Piolli, E., & Sala, M. (2022). A reforma do ensino médio e as reformas empresariais na educação. *EccoS – Revista Científica*, (62), 1-20.
- Ramos, A. C. (2021). *Abandono e evasão escolar de adolescentes: problema para uma rede (integrada) de proteção* (Dissertação de mestrado). Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Limeira.
- Reis, S. C. C. A. G., & Lopes, R. E. (2023). Mudanças para a permanência: a marca da dualidade pedagógica em diferentes projetos para o ensino médio no Brasil. *Cadernos Brasileiros de Terapia Ocupacional*, 31, 1-20.
- Rumberger, R. W. (2006). Why students drop out of school. In G. Orfield, *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation rate crisis* (pp. 131-155). Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.
- Saldaña, P. (2021a). *Só 6,6% das escolas públicas forneceram internet a alunos em 2020*. Recuperado em 9 julho de 2021, de <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/educacao/2021/07/so-66-das-escolas-publicas-forneceram-internet-a-alunos-em-2020.shtml>
- Saldaña, P. (2021b). *Cerca de 4 milhões abandonaram estudos na pandemia, diz pesquisa*. Recuperado em 13 junho de 2021, de <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/educacao/2021/01/cerca-de-4-milhoes-abandonaram-estudos-na-pandemia-diz-pesquisa.shtml>
- Savegnago, S. D. O. (2018). *Oportunidades de vida: fortuidades do tempo e mobilidades no espaço de jovens pobres cariocas* (Tese de doutorado). Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.
- Silva, M. R. (2023). Avanços e retrocessos nas recentes reformas do ensino médio: que rumo tomará a última etapa da educação básica? *EccoS – Revista Científica*, (67), 1-15.
- Sennett, R. (2004). *Respeito: a formação de um caráter em um mundo desigual*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record.
- Tronto, J. (2007). Assistência democrática e democracias assistenciais. *Sociedade e Estado, Brasília*, 22(2), 285-308.

Author's Contributions

This text is partly derived from the research project “Active and Democratic Care: theoretical-practical subsidies for the implementation of support policies for return and permanence” developed by Roseli Esquerdo Lopes, Beatriz Prado Pereira, Patrícia Leme de Oliveira Borba, Ana Paula Serrata Malfitano, Magno Nunes Farias, Lívia Celegati Pan, Marina Jorge da Silva, and Rafael Garcia Barreiro. Except for Ana Paula Serrata Malfitano and Magno Nunes Farias, the other authors were directly involved in the production and analysis of the experience reported here. Roseli Esquerdo Lopes and Beatriz Prado Pereira wrote the text, whose final version was approved by all authors. All authors approved the final version of the text.

Funding Source

Research Support Foundation of the State of Paraíba (FAPESQ-PB), process no. 47890.676.35577.11082021, and National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), process no. 404428/2023-1.

Corresponding author

Beatriz Prado Pereira
e-mail: beatriz.prado@academico.ufpb.br

Section editor

Prof. Dr. Késia Maria Maximiano de Melo