The qualification of the educommunicator: challenges of a new profession in the context of the world of work transformations

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Abstract: This article discusses Educommunication as a formative perspective and necessary competence to face contemporary challenges considering the recent transformations in the world of work. The professional of Educommunication is qualified to creatively seek opportunities and promote communication practices with educational purposes in a critical manner and with transformative potential. To do so, the article is structured in two axes: (1) the diagnosis of the transformations in the world of work in the digital context and its implications in professional training; (2) the proposal of the degree in Educommunication as a course capable of offering job prospects for a new professional who can contribute to the education of new generations.

Keywords: educommunication; world of work; digital technologies; educommunication training.

Resumo: Este artigo discute a Educomunicação como perspectiva formativa e competência necessária para o enfrentamento dos desafios contemporâneos em meio às transformações recentes no mundo do trabalho. O profissional de Educomunicação é formado para buscar de forma criativa as oportunidades de promoção das práticas comunicacionais com intenção educativa, de maneira crítica e com potencial transformador. Com esse objetivo, o artigo está estruturado em dois eixos: (1) o diagnóstico sobre as transformações no mundo do trabalho no contexto digital e suas implicações na formação profissional; (2) a proposta da licenciatura em Educomunicação como formação capaz de oferecer perspectivas de trabalho para um novo profissional que poderá contribuir para a educação das novas gerações.

Palavras-chave: educomunicação; mundo do trabalho; tecnologias digitais; formação em educomunicação.

The interrelationship between Social Communication and Education has gained its own density, and it appears today as a specific field of social intervention, offering a differentiated workspace that has been occupied, throughout Latin America, by the emerging figure of a professional we are calling "educommunicator."

Ismar de Oliveira Soares[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout this article, we discuss training aspects of the graduates in Educommunication as a professional capable of understanding the educational process from the perspective of communication and dialogue, configuring itself as a concrete response to challenges faced by transformations in the world of work.

We understand Educommunication as a formative perspective and competence necessary to address contemporary themes in the field of formal and non-formal education, whose aim is the training of critical, creative and professionals committed to social rights and citizenship causes. The professional of Educommunication is trained to develop skills in languages of communication and promote social technologies by creatively seeking opportunities for communication practices with educational purposes, in a critical manner and with transformative social potential.

Considering a world of work characterized by digital technologies, platform companies, big data economy, control and surveillance of citizens' private data, we discuss the contribution that the profile of a new professional such as the educommunicator can bring to new generations. The multidisciplinary and open structure to partnership with students and society in cultural and scientific activities, mandatory curricular internships in public schools with emphasis on intervention projects make the degree in Educommunication a university course sensitive to the impasses of contemporaneity, open and self-critical, because this is a course deeply based on research and social intervention.

We highlight, throughout the article, some points that have guided the work of professors from the Department of Communications and Arts of the School of Communications and Arts of University of São Paulo (ECA/USP) to enable the exercise of an innovative profession[2], and we seek to contribute, at least a little, to the reflection and practice regarding the training of this professional considering the avalanche of transformations around us. With such objectives, this article is structured in two axes plus conclusion. Initially, we contextualize aspects related to recent changes in the world of work and their impacts on professional development; later, we present aspects of the degree in Educommunication and some reflections on professional development; finally, we move on to the final considerations.

1. SOARES, Ismar de Oliveira. Comunicação/educação emergência de um novo campo e o perfil de seus profissionais. *In*: NÚCLEO de Comunicação e Educação da Universidade de São Paulo. São Paulo: NCE/USP, 2011a. p. 1.

2. MUNGIOLI, Maria Cristina; VIANA, Claudemir; RAMOS, Daniela. Uma formação inovadora na interface comunicação e comunicação: aspectos da licenciatura em Educomunicação da Escola de Comunicações e Artes da USP. **Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias de la Comunicación**, São Paulo, v. 14, n. 27, p. 218-228, 2017.

2. THE WORLD OF WORK AND THE CHALLENGES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A DIAGNOSIS

Large contingents of young workers on different continents, especially in Brazil, experience the sorrow of unemployment[3], intermittent and precarious work, without rights and low salaries. Young adults pile up in line for a vacancy, for an opportunity. The youngest lead the unemployment statistics. Not only the unqualified, but qualified people also face this drama. How can training and education transform this situation? In order to answer this question, we must understand more deeply the changes in the world of work and how communication plays a relevant role in the professionals' qualification.

In most 20th century, a specific type of urban and industrial work organization was developed. The industry advanced in the production of apparatus for urban life and its broad growth was due to the rationalization of working methods, called scientific management. Taylor was the founder of a method that measured workers' workflow, seeking greater optimization and productivity. His models were joined with Henry Ford's conveyor-belt, which provided production-wide gain, further expanding productivity and profits. In this method, humans and machines must follow the same pace, the worker's attention must be fully focused on their task. Speaking is prohibited, control is hierarchical, and surveillance is an intrinsic part of the process. This model was also implemented in the field of education. Schools reproduced the process of transmitting information, i.e. unidirectional and reproductive.

However, the economic crisis of the late 1970s, the end of the Cold War and technological advances put at stake the Taylorism/Fordism as a production process model. In post-World War II Japan, the versatility and flexibility of the functions and the quasi-religious engagement of the worker to the company had shown the success of Taiichi Ohno's model, the Toyota Production System[4]. The Japanese method of rationalization of work reaches the West in the 1980s (in Brazil, in the 1990s), and it brings the change in the worker's performance for production. In this model, engagement, participation, team, speech and idea are part of a strategy that requires the worker's dedication not only in their gestures and body but also in their subjectivity: it is necessary to love the company and do for it what is done for the family. Communication is imperative. Versatility and flexibility are transformations that bring to work the optimization of (both human and material) resources. The pace of production is accelerated, in addition to the increase in working hours[5], resulting in increased productivity and profitability. In education, this model has been implemented gradually, prioritizing the use of technology and communication skills, but it presupposes the incorporation of the logic of competition and individualism[6]. This model is anchored in quantitative assessment processes, which address the student to a certain model of success and innovation, in which critical and humanist formation is relegated to a background.

3. See: DESEMPREGO é de 11,8% e atinge 12,5 milhões; informalidade tem novo recorde. **Economia UOL**, São Paulo, 31 out. 2019. Available from: https://economia.uol.com.br/empregos-e-carreiras/noticias/redacao/2019/10/31/desemprego-pnad-ibge.htm?cmpid=copiaecola. Access on: Dec. 30, 2019.

4. ANTUNES, Ricardo. **Adeus ao trabalho?** Ensaios sobre as metamorfoses e a centralidade do mundo do trabalho. 3. ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 1995.

5. Aumento da jornada de trabalho é mais-valia absoluta; aumento do ritmo de trabalho é mais-valia relativa. Mais explicações em: MARX, Karl. Salário, preço, lucro. *In*: PORTAL Domínio Público. Brasília, DF: Brasil, [20--?]. Informe pronunciado nas sessões do Conselho Geral da Associação Internacional dos Trabalhadores, 1865. Available from: http://www.dominiopublico.gov.br/download/texto/ma000077.pdf. Access on: Dec. 30, 2019.

6. FRIGOTTO, Gaudêncio (org.). **Educação e crise do trabalho**: perspectivas de final de século. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1998. SAVIANI, Dermeval. Transformações do capitalismo, do mundo do trabalho e da educação. *In*: LOMBARDI, José Claudinei; SAVIANI, Dermeval; SANFELICE, José Luís (org.). Capitalismo, trabalho e educação. 2. ed. Campinas: Autores Associados, 2004. p. 9-21.

The Brazil of the 21st century presents a very transformed industrial sector, considering the organization of the business spatial planning, great unemployment and great deindustrialization[7], a population with a low level of education, much of it still outside school, with the perspective of technical training to meet neoliberal policies that reproduce Brazil's colonial model of economic relations with the world.

At the same time, digital technologies and the ongoing productive restructuring brought profound changes in the world of work as well as new challenges for education and professional development. Many functions and professions have been extinguished. Platform companies – Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft – are consolidated as conglomerates that control broad sectors of production and services worldwide.

The much-dreamed-of global village, the knowledge and information society is replaced by misinformation, fake news, consumer bubbles on social media, precariousness and total deregulation of workers' rights. Work mediated by platform companies, work gamification, click farms[8] and machine learning algorithms create an environment of precariousness, instability, disidentification of workers, whose results are felt on three levels: growth of financier capital; increase in poverty and violence; and destruction of democracies (even the liberal ones). Education and professional development, in this context, face profound dilemmas, because the moment requires immediate action in the preparation of new generations, so they can become more critical, proactive and transformative subjects. However, decent job opportunities are scarce[9], and democratic freedom has been strongly affected by the logic of mercantile control and invasion of private data.

Important theorists have been analyzing the current situation, among which we can mention Ricardo Antunes, in his book *O privilégio da servidão* (2018)[10], which deals with the precariousness of work, intermittent work, and unpaid work as characteristic aspects of a neoliberal conception that deregulates the entire capital/work relationship and establishes the privilege of servitude; Ursula Huws, in *A formação do cibertariado* (2017)[11], which expands the theme when dealing with "cyberwork," i.e. all forms of work linked with digital technologies[12], even those works dedicated to the extraction of ores for electronic components. Ursula Huws deals with the materiality of work and the need to understand the characteristic that continues to provide class to workers, i.e. the extraction of more value from human labor.

To deepen the diagnosis of changes in the world of work, it is necessary to understand more generally how the condition of workers is being conformed by platform companies. In this sense, Nick Srnicek, in Platform Capitalism (2018)[13], explains how Google, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft, IBM, Spotify, Rolls Royce, Pandora, Zipcar, Uber, and Airbnb, among others, each with their specificity, appropriate the data of workers, users, partners, customers and suppliers to operate their business and set up profitability strategies. They rely on installed material infrastructure of cable networks and products in connection. These companies also need communication as a rationalized process that establishes the possibility of operation and existence of business. They need the passive

7. See: NÓBREGA, Bárbara. Brasil tem terceira maior desindustrialização entre 30 países desde 1970; recuperação está distante. O Globo, Rio de Janeiro, 15 jul. 2019. Economia. Available from: https://oglobo.globo.com/economia/brasil-tem-terceira-maior-desindustrializacao-entre-30-paises-desde-1970-recuperacao-esta-distante-23779863. Access on: Nov. 20, 2019.

8. Click farms are companies that negotiate amounts of clicks for membership of a product, message or any type of information available on the internet. Dozens and even hundreds of mobile phones are connected to websites and social networks, replicating clicks. KEDOUK, Marcia. Como funcionam as fazendas de cliques e onde elas ficam. **Exame**, São Paulo, 26 jan. 2018. Available from: https://exame.abril.com.br/negocios/conheca-as-fazendas-de-cliques/. Access on: Dec. 13, 2019.

9. OIT – ORGANIZAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DO TRABALHO. **A aplicação e a promoção das normas internacionais do trabalho**. Genève: OIT, 2014. Available from: http://twixar.me/RyWT. Access on: Dec. 30, 2019.

10. ANTUNES, Ricardo. **O privilégio da servidão**: o novo proletariado de serviços na era digital. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2018.

11. HUWS, Ursula. **A formação do cibertariado**: trabalho virtual em um mundo real. Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 2017.

collusion of workers, especially young people, offering their abilities and intelligence without claiming rights or recognition. Content producers for distance learning bases are a dramatic example of this reality.

This scenario is remarkable in the economic sector of communication. Companies have deeply changed. The number of jobs has been reduced, and digital technology devices, social networks and the internet have changed their way of working and the necessary skills to perform different communication professions. In advertising, the new logic of media funding adds poisonous ingredient in the reconfigurations of professions in this area. In spite of so many changes, it is not about seeking adaptations and an uncritical position of submission. Communication professionals are nowadays more necessary than before, and they are expected to be committed to society and to the search for quality services for citizens, considering the wide existing possibilities and, at the same time, the enormous obstacles provided by the accumulation, by an ever smaller group of people, of socially produced wealth.

These configurations of work relations deepen the dilemmas of education and communication. New questions are asked about what kind of training and professional preparation can be expected from school and university. The world of work, as a broader aspect that goes further than the place of work and covers other institutions and spaces of social and everyday life, in a way, it guides the preparation of new generations.

Our contribution, as researchers and educators in the area of Communication, is to consolidate the qualification of the educommunicator's profile, as a professional capable of guiding him/herself through these hard times.

3. THE QUALIFICATION OF THE EDUCOMMUNICATOR AND THE EXISTING CHALLENGES

In this complex social scenario in which digital and networking technologies are conditioning ways of thinking, acting and working, becoming an increasingly valued capital, the diagnosis of communication researchers — which have been formulated throughout more than 15 years of research — resulted in a multidisciplinary proposal between the fields of Communication and Education, leading to a new professional profile. The mission proposed is to form educommunicators for the promotion of processes that strengthen the ability of citizens to communicate in the complex context of contemporaneity, in order to exercise the right to communicate and to freedom of speech. This implies knowing how to perform the critical reading of such scenario, not only to perceive conceptual and practical codes and norms in general society and, in particular, in Communication, Education and the world of work, but also in a way that students and educators are constituted as subjects capable of knowing how to use and recreate contemporary communication resources through more participatory and democratic perspectives.

12. Digital work – the one mediated by platforms and available in network, such as professional work or user work – is configured as the contemporary form of capitalism – as data colonialism for Mejías and Couldry, or as surveillance capitalism for Shoshana Zuboff – remodeling and deepening the exploitation of work in its different characteristics. MEJÍAS, Ulisses; COULDRY, Nick. Colonialismo de datos: repensando la relación de los datos masivos con el sujeto contemporáneo. **Virtualis**, Zapopan, v. 10, n. 18, 2019. Available from: https://www.revistavirtualis.mx/index.php/virtualis/article/view/289/301. Access on: Dec. 10, 2019. ZUBOFF, Shoshana. **The age of surveillance capitalism**: the fight for a human future at the new frontier of power. New York: Public Affairs, 2019.

13. SRNICEK, Nick. **Capitalismo de plataformas**. Buenos Aires: Caja Negra, 2018.

The training in Educommunication has provided discussions, research and studies that seek to build situations, processes and products of alternative knowledge, in which the roots of Educommunication, as a social practice, are encouraged by the contents and activities promoted in disciplines, events, media productions, and all actions supported by the political-pedagogical project of the degree in Educommunication.

The creation of the degree in Educommunication, in 2011, by the Department of Communications and Arts of ECA/USP, defines an innovative proposal in terms of Higher Education training. The course aims to train a professional to work in the Communication/Education interface based on a transdisciplinary and socially responsible perspective, considering the mediation[14] being established, as discussed by Soares[15], from social intervention. The performance of this professional occurs in areas such as: Education for Communication; uses and appropriations for technologies in Education; Communication management in the educational area, and "epistemological reflection on the interrelationship Communication/Education[16]."

As one can observe, the areas of intervention in Educommunication are drawn based on the complexity inherent to the studies of Education and Communication, demanding a more interested look to understand the relationships, articulations, mediation occurring in social spaces and, more specifically, in formal and informal education spaces. Such approach refers, as Morin emphasizes, to the multidimensionality not only of social objects, but also of human beings:

> we must not forget that man is a biological-sociocultural being, and that social phenomena are both economic, cultural, psychological, etc. That said, by aspirating multidimensionality, complex thinking carries within it a principle of incompleteness and uncertainty[17] (our translation).

Situated in the interface between two complex fields and sharing their incompleteness and uncertainties, Educommunication is shown as a space in constant construction, whose dynamics reflect and refract the complexity of its theoretical and practical objects inserted in the context of profound transformations of the world of work and professional development. To face this scenario, we agree with Soares that one of the challenges is the building of "educommunicative" ecosystems. Such ecosystems require the educommunicator for actions that unfold into practices:

> (a) inclusive (no community member can feel as they are out of the process); (b) democratic (fundamentally recognizing radical equality between the people involved); c) mediatic (valuing the mediation made possible by information resources); d) creative (aligned to all forms of manifestation of local culture)[18] (our translation).

Considering these developments, the curriculum of the degree in Educommunication was structured to create training opportunities in many cultural situations, in the exploration of elements and processes specific to the Communication/Education interface, whose central principles are organized

14. MARTÍN-BARBERO, Jesús. **Dos meios às mediações**: comunicação, cultura e hegemonia. Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 2001.

15. SOARES, Ismar de Oliveira. Educomunicação: um campo de mediações. *In*: CITELLI, Adilson; COSTA, Maria Cristina (org.). **Educomunicação**: construindo uma nova área de conhecimento. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2011b. p. 13-29.

16. Ibidem, p. 26.

17. MORIN, Edgar. **Ciência com consciência**. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2005, p. 177.

18. SOARES, Ismar de Oliveira. Educomunicação: o conceito, o profissional, a aplicação: contribuições para a reforma do Ensino Médio. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2011c, p. 37.

by the philosophical-practical axis of Educommunication. This axis is characterized as a professional and social practice and also from a set of key notions of the phenomena inherent to this interface, especially based on the maxim that education is a communicative process, as Paulo Freire points out[19].

The proposal for the professional qualification of the educommunicator is a long process of studies on the relevance of communication management based on practices previously presented, listed by Soares[20]. Many of these thoughts helped structure the basis for the editorial line of the *Communica*ção *& Educa*ção, founded in 1994. It also arises from the verification of a new professional profile, identified in society with the founding research[21], promoted between 1997 and 1999, by the Center for Communications and Education of USP.

Thus, the qualification of the educommunicator is constituted by philosophical pillars and communication processes present in the political-pedagogical project that must be carried out during the four years of the course. During this period, the student is expected to attend optional disciplines from other units and areas of knowledge, in addition to the disciplines that constitute the basic curriculum, according to their interests. The core of training disciplines in Educommunication challenges students and professors to the educommunicative praxis in several ways, such as media productions demanded by practical-theoretical disciplines, or by the creation of intervention projects in the disciplines of teaching methodologies present in the curriculum of the course, as we will detail below.

As a result of this training, we expect a professional with a qualified profile to manage social intervention processes through the creative use of communication and education technologies from a socially responsible perspective, aiming to provide and/or strengthen more democratic, multiple and diversified communicative ecosystems. This dialogical praxis, which is anchored in multiculturalism and respect for diversity, enables the creation of more respectful and horizontal formative environments, in which educommunicative practices among subjects and institutions promote critical knowledge with ethical and democratic values.

The scientific and professional knowledge in Educommunication, intended at the end of the degree in Educommunication, will find insertion in the labor market in different situations, areas and functions, and it is contemplated from the epistemological organization of Educommunication in its seven areas of social intervention, namely: Education for Communication; Communication Pedagogy; communicative expression through art; technological mediation in Education; Communication management in educational processes; media production in Education; epistemology of Educommunication.

Regarding the area of intervention and technological mediation in Education, which deals with the presence of information and communication technologies (ICT) in our daily lives and the need to understand their uses and their social, cultural and cognitive implications, notably in the processes

19. FREIRE, Paulo. **A importância do ato de ler**: em três artigos que se completam. 23. ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 1989.

20. SOARES, op. cit., 2011c.

21. SOARES, Ismar de Oliveira. Comunicação/Educação: a emergência de um novo campo e o perfil de seus profissionais. **Contato**, Brasília, DF, ano 1, n. 2, p. 19-74, 1999. Available from: http://www.nceusp.blog.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Ismar-Soares_RevContato_1999.pdf. Access on: 10 dez. 2019.

of Communication and Education, we highlight the need to educate ourselves based on a more humanistic, cultural, critical and citizen perspective, opposed to a posture based on technical and cognitive skills for individualized, consumerist and competitive use of the ICT.

In this way, in addition to the qualification of the educommunicator for practical, creative and innovative situations regarding the use of ICT and digital culture in processes that support the creation and/or strengthening of educommunicative ecosystems, the presence of digital technologies in daily life presents challenges and ethical/professional issues to the educommunicator, and they are the object of reflection throughout the course, especially considering the evil uses of communication technologies to disseminate disinformation, hate speech and fake news.

Succinctly, the degree in Educommunication aim to train professionals to act (1) in education, as communication teachers; (2) in the consulting area — as advisors of educational communication projects; and (3) as researchers. These three kinds of performance unfold and are dynamically constituted by the transformations that have been occurring extremely fast in the configuration of spaces for future professionals in the world of work.

In more specific terms of acquiring knowledge and practices for the development of activities in formal and non-formal education spaces, the degree in Educommunication has in its curriculum three disciplines with supervised internship, namely: CCA0316 – Communication Teaching Methodology, CA0308 – Educommunication Teaching Methodology and CCA0307 – Communication Management within the Scope of Educational Spaces with Supervised Internship. The first two are intended for internships in public Elementary and High schools. The third discipline presents innovative characteristics, as it proposes the realization of internships and projects in spaces of non-formal and informal education.

The disciplines CCA0316 and CCA0308 provide students with the experience of knowing the daily life of public Elementary and High schools as well as working in this daily life intervention projects. As the main characteristic of these projects, we highlight their development based on a continuous observation and reflection process carried out by the intern in the face of the theoretical and practical foundation that underpins not only such disciplines, but the set of disciplines that compose the curriculum of the course. Shortly, as to the issue of supervised internships, we can state they are characterized as an integrative element in the qualification of the future professor, as these internships aim to develop a critical and problematizing view of the Brazilian educational reality, while seeking to establish possibilities for action and transformation of this reality.

Thus, the realization of supervised internships is an indispensable step for the qualification of those graduated in Educommunication, to the extent that the internship is conceived not only as the "practical part" of the course, but mainly as an unique moment for a critical reflection about society and

the concrete manners in which the reproduction of inequalities is established in school. This reflection is not limited to critical observation in relation to the practices of professors and the courses observed, but it is defined mainly by the constant reflection on the foundations of an epistemology of Educommunication, founded on social transformation.

We can say the main characteristic of the internship as affirmed by Pimenta and Lima:

> [the] method of training future educators translates, on the one hand, into the mobilization of research that enables expansion and analysis of the contexts where the internships occur; on the other hand, and in particular, it translates into the possibility for interns to develop posture and research skills from internship situations, elaborating projects that allow them to understand and question situations they observe[22] (our translation).

This conception has implications that unfold both in relation to the posture of the intern in face of the situations experienced during the internship, and in relation to the knowledge acquired throughout the degree. Pimenta and Lima also highlight that this type of internship:

> presupposes another approach to knowledge, which shall consider it no longer as truth able to explain any situation observed, which has led interns to say what educators should do. It is assumed that new knowledge must be sought in the relationship between existing explanations and new data that reality imposes and that are perceived in the investigative posture[23] (our translation).

Thus, we seek "praxis in which action and reflection, solidarity, are constantly and mutually enlightened. In which the practice, implying the theory from which it does not separate, also implies a posture of those who seek knowledge and not from those who passively receive it[24]."

Based on this conception, principles and practices of Educommunication studied throughout the course, we understand teaching as a social practice – or more precisely, Educommunication as a social practice – i.e. as a way of intervening in reality seeking to transform it through Educommunication.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The deep crisis that falls on the world of work does not come from technological change, but from its use. Digital information and communication technologies have been used, for the most part, to exacerbate inequalities in relation to access to the wealth that society produces. Especially, we are experiencing an avalanche of unemployment and job destruction, whose solutions are not articulated for professional changes capable of welcoming the contingent of young workers. For example, schools have not received the state's deserved attention to enhance itself as a place of technological, ethical, intellectual and humanist skill development that address the existing needs and challenges.

22. PIMENTA, Selma; LIMA, Maria Socorro. **Estágio e docência**. São Paulo: Cortez, 2012, p. 46.

23. Ibidem, p. 46.

24. FREIRE, Paulo. **Extensão ou comunicação?** Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 2010, p. 80.

The technical and mercantilist matrix that feeds the world of work and education must be transformed. The training of professionals in school must combat dogmatism, segregationism and prejudice, which are part of the common sense of our society. The educommunicators are being trained to act in these conditions of inequalities and profound ethical problems in relation to human rights and citizenship.

The mission of so many educators, represented here by Paulo Freire, has been tireless. The degree in Educommunication and the set of professors and researchers who created it and who support it participate in this Brazilian tradition of intellectuals who fight for quality public education, one deeply inserted in the everyday life of the Brazilian population, so young people can have their own space in the world of decent work.

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