

**The working conditions of the substitute university professor in contemporary times: exploring the reality of a public university**

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**Abstract**

The present study aims to discuss the precariousness of the teaching labor conditions in contemporary capitalism, particularly addressing the status of the substitute teacher in the magisterium career on academic education. The nature of the study is qualitative and exploratory, based on documentary analysis and interview, due to its approximate bias to the theme, being guided by the theoretical-methodological perspective of historical-dialectical materialism and Marxist ontology. The main results of our investigation indicate that substitute teachers are submitted to visible conditions of devaluation of their teaching activities. His work, marked by transience, almost becomes a necessary requirement for his future hiring as an effective public teacher. In this sense, the teachers are subordinated to receive a remuneration that, in general, is well inferior compared to effective teachers. Their activities are distinguished by the “aulism”, instead of the research and extension, which, in addition to teaching, also compose the basic social functions of the university, whose reference is the production of knowledge and its application.

**Keywords**

University teaching. Substitute teacher. Precariousness.

**As condições de trabalho do professor universitário substituto na contemporaneidade: explorando a realidade de uma universidade pública**

**Resumo**

O estudo ora apresentado tem por objetivo discutir sobre a precarização das condições do trabalho docente no capitalismo contemporâneo, particularmente abordando a condição de professor substituto na carreira do magistério superior. A natureza do estudo é qualitativa e exploratória, com base em análise documental e entrevista, em razão de seu viés aproximativo acerca do tema, sendo norteado pela perspectiva teórico-metodológica do materialismo histórico-dialético e da ontologia marxiana. Os principais resultados indicam que os professores substitutos são submetidos a visíveis condições de desvalorização das suas atividades docentes. Seu trabalho, marcado pela transitoriedade, quase se transforma em um requisito necessário à futura contratação como servidor público efetivo. Nesse sentido, os professores se subordinam a receber uma remuneração que, em geral, é bem inferior àquela recebida pelos professores efetivos. Suas atividades se destacam pelo “aulismo”, em detrimento

da pesquisa e da extensão, as quais, para além do ensino, também compõem funções sociais básicas da universidade, cuja referência é a produção do conhecimento e sua aplicação.

**Palavras-chave**

Docência universitária. Professor substituto. Precarização.

**Las condiciones de trabajo del profesor sustituto en la universidad contemporánea: explorando la realidad de una universidad pública**

**Resumen**

El estudio que aquí se presenta tiene como objetivo discutir las precarias condiciones de trabajo docente en el capitalismo contemporáneo, principalmente abordando la condición del profesor sustituto en la carrera docente universitaria. La naturaleza del estudio es cualitativa y exploratoria, con base en análisis documental y entrevista, debido a su sesgo aproximado sobre el tema, siendo guiado por el punto de vista teórico y metodológico del materialismo histórico y dialéctico y la ontología marxista. Los principales resultados indican que los profesores sustitutos están sometidos a condiciones visibles de la devaluación de sus actividades de enseñanza. Su obra, marcada por la transitoriedad, casi se convierte en un requisito necesario para un futuro empleo como servidor público. En este sentido, los docentes están subordinados a recibir un salario que, en general, es muy inferior al de los profesores efectivos. Sus actividades incluyen el “aulismo” a expensas de la investigación y la extensión, que, además de la enseñanza, también forman parte de las funciones sociales básicas de la universidad, cuya referencia es la producción de conocimiento y su aplicación.

**Palabras clave**

Docencia universitaria. Profesor sustituto. Precariedad.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This study aims to contribute to the clarification of teaching labor conditions at a public university located in the Northeast region of Brazil. Before presenting the research's contributions, we elected to discuss, briefly, the most general elements of the current scenario of Brazilian universities, known, according to Chauí (2003, our translation), as “operational university”; in addition to discussing their repercussions on the teaching activity, especially of temporary or substitute teachers.

As a theoretical-methodological research perspective, we're grounded on the foundation of Marxist ontology and its materialist and historical dialectics as a basis to analyze and interpret, in a still initial and exploratory manner, labor conditions for university substitute teachers at a public institution. This perspective boosted the chosen methodological procedures and their application: theoretical-document analysis, as a first study, and semi-structured interview carried out through motivating questions, as an illustrative complement to the first study.

The two stages anticipated here corresponded to the portfolio of available public documents from the investigated university's administration, such as: statutes, resolutions, career plans, among others, as well as an empirical investigation that took into consideration the interview in its depth. For that effect, in the field, we used an interview based on a semi-structured script, which intends to trade quantity of information for quality and depth of data collected with the researched subjects, exchanging statistical representation for the understanding of experiences, since the qualitative dimension of research is grounded on the ability to explain reality and on the availability of subjects to report experiences vertically (DUARTE, 2005).

This second study, as a complement to the first, took place in February 2016, through interviews with three university substitute teachers, who had been working for a significant time at the institution – two of them from the Education Center (CED, in Portuguese) and the other from the Center of Applied Social Studies (CESA, in Portuguese) of the researched university. They're teachers from a public university of Law, managed by the state government, with a history of over 40 years in Higher Education.

## **2 SOME GENERAL ELEMENTS ABOUT THE CURRENT SCENARIO AT BRAZILIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

In the shelter of the republican concept that emerged after the French Revolution, the modern public university is a unique social institution. On one hand, it proclaims the determined and active capacity of particular subjects in producing universal values as members of society; on the other hand, it's been demonstrated to be not only the appropriate place to carry out such mission, but also the place that highlights their limits

and possibilities of achievement. It needs to answer to external and internal forces as a limit of its autonomy as representative of the government's power and becomes a locus of social struggle. As Chauí (2003) reminds us, this concept, embraced by the university in its origin, means that it has the status of a public and secular institution (*res publica*), independent from Church and the very government, since these entities would have no authority over the university's internal academic policy. Therefore, the knowledge produced, discovered and transmitted by the university would be guided mainly by its own logic.

In that context, education and culture become political, basis of the debate concerning rights and quality of knowledge desired also by workers, integral terms of a civilizing notion of citizenry and access to education for different social classes; then, the regulating idea of university starts to be a democratic concept. However, the social reality was, at that moment, contradictory, since it advertised concrete formal equality, aiming to obscure class struggles and repeal socialist ideals (HOBBSAWN, 2013). In that horizon, since the university, as any other social institution, expresses class struggles, it is inevitable to have a stance on it; thence emerges, according to Chauí (2003), a tense and contradictory relationship between university, government and society, which will consolidate the creation and upkeep of that institution in Western bourgeois society.

Regarding Brazilian university, it would come to be the subject of many reforms (ROMANELLI, 1996). The most important reform for our analysis is the one in the context of the 1990s, as a reflex of the reform in the government itself in the context of injunction of neoliberal policies. In that reform, education, along with other social rights, such as culture, transcends the condition of right to be part of the service sector, defined as not exclusive to the Union, available for the private sector.

The reason why the university went from a social institution committed to the interests of social and cultural life to a service provider social organization, which aims to beat the competition, according to Chauí (2003), is due to the new project of ideopolitical domination of capital carried out by the dominant class. In the ideology sphere, the current moment is denominated, by Harvey (2011), as postmodernity, whose reality is presented as fragmented, superficial, desubstancialized, lacking references and memory, with ephemeral values and fragile, little affective

relationships. In social relations, among many aspects, there is an ingrained cult to subjectivism and an exacerbation of narcissistic individualism.

The concept of postmodernity is handled by Harvey (2011) as a skill of powerful ideological slant, advertised in a planetary scope, that would aim to establish new consensus and social order to which we should all adapt. For that author, it is a product of contemporary capitalism in crisis, which aims to extract more and more overwork and subservience from the human workforce, assuring the dominant class of the sustained excess profits and class sovereignty.

The appearance of postmodern society would be revealed as a mobile and unstable network, consisting of organizations guided by particular strategies, in order to win the competition for the accumulation of riches and territories. Therefore, society and nature are, abstractly, converted into a dangerous and menacing “environment”, of fluid character, crisscrossed by virtual time and space whose management, programming, planning and control must be conducted through strategies of technological intervention and power plays.

In contemporary capitalism, where the model of flexible accumulation prevails, the notion of time and space gets altered, a process Harvey (2011, our translation) called “spacetime compression”, whose fragmentation, dispersion and flexibility are the order. Through the effects of information technologies, reality is reduced to here and now, no distance, no diversity or frontiers; everything in real time, without past or future. Time loses its depth, shrinking to the movement of fast, trivial and fleeting images (MAIA FILHO; CHAVES; RIBEIRO; SOUSA, 2014). Based on simplistic analyses, postmodern intellectuals, in turn, interpret current days merely as the “age of uncertainty”, of liquid social relations, loss of values, consumerism, generalized discomfort, without clearly explaining the origin of all these phenomena or pointing toward possibilities of social rupture with that reality.

Promptly, through the effect of a critical bias, Chauí (2003) emphasizes, postmodernity is interpreted as that which imposes conformism in the face of the annihilation of the most solid references of human life, which tends to disorientate everyday perception, science, literature and the arts. Everything fades, leaving no traces, because, as predicted in the wise words of Marx and Engels (2013, our translation), “everything solid dissolves into air”. All that remains and is strengthened

is the feeling of insecurity, is the fear that paralyzes and resurrects the acritical and despotic conservatism.

Based on that context, there are profound consequences for universities, especially concerning the production of scientific knowledge and teaching, both standardized by the practical ideal of “flexibilization”. From then on, the contemporary model of Higher Education is the “operational university” – different from the “functional university” of 1970, whose aim is the workforce; and from the “university of results” of 1980, whose aim are the companies –, which, despite not being an unambiguous concept in critical tradition, invites interesting reflection due to the elements it presents (CHAUÍ, 2003).

Under that university model, academic research submits to the organizational standard, fragmenting into extremely focalized delineations, whose products are centered on the micro and the everyday. This happens within the structure of the “operational university”, which doesn’t allow time for great reflections and more critical examinations of reality.

It is, thus, debatable that in university spaces the cognitive activity is neglected to the detriment of the strategic game of market competition and its proposals, with the creation of new disciplines permeated with micro problems and new obstacles. A university that behaves this way has all probability of being well evaluated by public bodies linked to education, being considered one of the most promising.

This perspective has led to productivism and utilitarianism of science, which underestimates critical training and research and downgrades and neglects teaching (MACHADO; BIANCHETTI, 2011). This happens because universities are increasingly privatized, which, sometimes, subordinates their researches and constrains researchers to the interests of the market and the optics of their patrons. Therefore, the knowledge produced inside the university walls starts to have owners, which may, then, denote that the modernization of the university, whose social progress is an implicit thesis, wouldn’t have as a main objective benefits for humankind, but the subordination to the market logic.

This context originates other consequences, such as the insistent ideological fetish, advocated by international entities, that the 21st century society would be the society of knowledge. According to Chauí (2003) and Maia Filho and Jimenez (2013), this new concept is closely associated to technological changes relative to the alleged information circulation, whose instigating agent would be the intensive and competitive use of knowledge, contributing to the accumulation and reproduction of the system in a time of maximum speculation of financial capital. It is exactly that pillar that supports outsourcing the teaching activity, which makes public university work precarious.

In this sense, the objective and subjective implications for teachers who dedicate themselves to research are varied, since that is an activity that, in the current model, may become increasingly commercialized. In fact, this perspective inhibits the admiration for the action of making science, disconnecting, first, the affinity between subject and knowledge and, ultimately, severely debilitating the identity between the teacher and the educational activity itself, that is, the university training that has the autonomous production of knowledge as one of its main pillars.

In addition, another important item to highlight in the current university scenario is academic entrepreneurship, both concerning the new curricula, which pave the lightened and superficial training for students with so-called postmodern principles and guidelines, and concerning the teaching activity itself, which has to turn to fundraising for research and extension fields and to academic productivism (MACHADO; BIANCHETTI, 2011).

We understand that entrepreneurial practice within the university walls is another strategy to distort the education ethos, since it aims to shape the citizen through the bourgeois logic of upward mobility, whose nodal objective is the exploration of human labor. This entrepreneurial logic, implemented in university spaces, contributes to invert and subvert professional training and the very essence of teaching activity.

Finally, although this context isn't a homogeneous situation within the university – because there is still some resistance from teachers, particularly teacher mobilization –, we can assume broad subservience from universities nowadays to the operating logic of the system of capital.

### **3 INITIAL REMARKS ABOUT WORK CONDITIONS FOR SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS: FUNCTION DEVIATION, INCREASED WORK HOURS AND “LECTURISM” IN QUESTION**

A short time ago, we would have been able to say that legislation, as well as social policy, originated mainly from the struggle of movements organized by workers and aimed to protect them from the exploitation of capitalism. However, in the face of neoliberal ideals, especially in Brazil, we verify that these legislations, under the fetish paradigm of “flexibilization” – which, in fact, means a group of precarious forms of work –, have been undergoing dismantling that, more than anything else, characterize them as new tools for worker exploitation.

These are the circumstances of the public university, which experiences a scenario marked by budget cuts, “scrapping” of infrastructure and abandonment in its most general sense, noted by privatizing, outsourcing and the increasingly systematic forms of subcontracting.

An illustration of those dynamics is the researched university and its numerous selections for substitute and temporary teachers. We highlight that the institution carried out so many selections in so little time that often they happened more than once per year. We need to admit that it is almost impossible to accompany such events in detail, and it is feasible to point just to the more general aspects, such as the exponential increase in the number of substitute teachers, which is opposite to the increase/maintenance of the number of permanent teachers.

Records of the document analysis from the researched university show that, in 2008, there were 116 substitute teachers and, in 2014, there were 245, corresponding to an exponential increase of 211% in only six years. Counter to that increase, the number of permanent teachers, in 2008, was 879, while, in 2014, it was 772, that is, a decrease of 12%, due to several different reasons, such as: retirement, maternity leave, death, voluntary resignation, medical leave etc. If we also consider that 107 teachers asked for temporary dismissal to attend postgraduation classes in that period, the number of substitutes significantly increases, encompassing approximately 25% of staff.

One fact that needs to be demarcated, according to the legislation sustaining the condition of substitute teacher, such as internal Resolution N. 1032/2014, is that this teaching modality has a reason to exist in the following cases: temporary work leave of the permanent teacher due to medical reasons or maternity leave; temporary work leave due to an illness in the family; temporary work leave due to personal reasons; temporary work leave due to classes for a Master's or Doctorate degree or postgraduate internship.

Considering the situations listed, we argue that it is entirely justifiable to meet the demands to hire teachers as temporary, whether visiting or substitute, especially to contemplate work leave provided by law. However, what we verify is a function deviation of legislation so that the substitute teacher, instead of being the solution for a temporary and emergency vacancy in the university's permanent staff, becomes a permanent situation.

These circumstances imply a scenario of strong instability in the university panorama, hindering course planning and the development of research and extension – dimensions that demand medium- and long-term projections and the public servant tenure. In other words, greater hiring of substitute teachers weakens the entire organizational structure of the education entity, reducing it to a fickle institution, almost like a “substitute university”. In order to expose a panorama about the researched university's situation, we examined the public notices of the last twelve selections of substitute teachers, which took place in the last seven years.

This examination allowed us to verify, for example, that some courses “survive” almost completely dependent on the substitute modality of professional hiring. That is the case of the Medicine course, which constantly offers substitute vacancies, contrasting with the other courses, which fluctuate in vacancy numbers, sometimes offering a large number of substitute vacancies, sometimes few, sometimes none. A compilation of those data can be seen in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1 – Number of vacancies per course (2009-2016)

<b>Course</b>	<b>Vacancies</b>
Medicine	152
Languages	71
Pedagogy	67
Administration	52
Veterinary Medicine	41
Mathematics	41
Nutrition	39
Social Services	34
Psychology	30
Nursing	29
Computer Sciences	28
Biological Sciences	25
Physics	24
Physical Education	22
Geography	22
Accounting Sciences	19
Chemistry	15
Music	15
Philosophy	13
Social Sciences	09
History	04
<b>Total</b>	<b>752</b>

Source: Prepared by the authors (2019).

We suppose that the reason for this turnover is linked to the low wages of substitute teachers, among other work conditions, especially, in the case of the Medicine course, when we take into consideration the average wage of doctors, for example, in the job market – however, this explanation deserves, by itself, specific investigation.

Obviously, the issue of wages isn't the only form of devaluation to which substitute teachers are subjected, but, since income is what ensures the worker's survival in a capitalist society, we decided to present that factor based on two aspects: first, its evolution through the latest years; and comparatively, as shown in a following table, the distance between wages of permanent and substitute teachers based on data collected in the latest public notices released by the institution for the selection of permanent and substitute teachers, from 2015 to 2016. These data express real discrimination between the work of substitute and permanent teachers through their wages (Table 2):

Tabela 2 – Wage comparative (2015-2016)

Regime	Master (substitute)	Master (permanent)	Doctor (substitute)	Doctor (permanent)
20 hours	R\$ 1,788.03	R\$ 3,338.37	R\$ 2,384.02	R\$ 4,829.64
40 hours	R\$ 3,576.05	R\$ 6,676.73	R\$ 4,768.03	R\$ 9,659.30

Source: Prepared by the authors (2019).

The aforementioned wage disparity refers only to masters and doctors because in the selections used to compare wages these were the education levels specified. Therefore, another factor to consider is that if we take into account the 40-hour regime for permanent teacher in the condition of exclusive dedication, the wages for masters and doctors increase to R\$ 8,335.55 and R\$ 11,793.95, respectively. This allows us to visualize that, in the same 40-hour regime and with the same education level – doctor –, the substitute teacher earns R\$ 4,891.27 less than the permanent teacher; the same situation happens for the masters, whose wage consists of R\$ 3,099.95 less than that of permanent teachers. For the 20-hour regime, the difference in wages consists of R\$ 2,445.62 and R\$ 1,550.34, respectively.

In this sense, in order to express these and other aspects of work conditions of substitute teachers in a university context, we evoke elements that originated in the reports of the research subjects as illustrative of our analyses. Based on their voices, we were able to observe the hypothesis we set out to verify with this research: the substitute teacher as an expression of the devaluation of teaching labor conditions in contemporary capitalism.

Beforehand, the teachers begin by informing that selections, although frequent at the university, often do not hire those approved immediately, depending on the course. Then, these processes are characterized as exhaustive and stressful. Let's see:

*The story of carrying out selections for substitutes is very stressful! Imagine every two years you have to go through a 'substitute' selection?! We have colleagues who do that every year, their contract isn't ever over, they already do another [selection] to guarantee one more year. So, that's really stressful for the teacher! (TEACHER 3, our translation).*

Therefore, we can notice in that report a slant of anxiety and uncertainty about the future, due to such an unstable present as the substitute teacher's. The interviewees inform that one of the reasons that led them to develop their teaching activities at the university was a strong identity established between them and the institution, with noticeable pride in belonging there. These teachers, who graduated there, indicate that their teaching careers began still as undergraduates, although not necessarily in a teaching degree, but through being teaching assistants, activities of scientific initiation, research groups, among others that contributed to their path to the teaching profession. All of that matured in the Master's degree, especially after the teaching internship that, regarding the teaching dimension, had stimulating aspects, and, at last, they feel the need to return as teachers to the institution that was part of their history, as indicated in the following speeches:

*[...] If you ask me, I don't want to go through another selection, I want to stay here. Even with all these [work] conditions, I'm very happy here! Because of the environment. I've been to other universities and I like them, I like the University environment. I think it's the affective relation that I have here. [...] I want to continue my career here [...] when I'm 'permanent', I'll be even happier, because I already like what I do! So, I'll be even happier, I'll be happier! [Smiles]. (TEACHER 2, our translation).*

*My perspective is that I will, one day, in this life, not in the next one, in this life, become a 'permanent teacher'. [...] So, the work I do is work to be a 'permanent teacher' at the University [...]. Yes, yes, there, with all those difficulties. [...] Because I believe we have to fight for the public university. I believe we have to fight for more social rights. Because there's the connections, to land, to the Northeast, to Ceará, to family. And thinking about knowledge in this Ceará, in my land. The thing about being in Ceará is also related to this acknowledgement of who I am as Northeastern, who I want to become, a university teacher. [...] I want here, because it is here that people build knowledge. I don't need to go halfway across the country and say their knowledge is above ours. [...] This thing about the Northeast, about Ceará, is really strong in me! It's the attachment to the land, the attachment to my roots! [Smiles]. (TEACHER 3, our translation).*

On the other hand, according to the statements obtained in in-depth interviews, even the teachers who didn't graduate at the university, when they enter there, assure us that this university brings them intense affection due to the good work environment, both with their colleagues and their students.

Regarding their work hours, the interviewees worked 40 hours per week, with that workload divided between the three shifts of the institution. They teach, on average, four classes, which mean a minimum of four student groups, which already totals approximately 32 hours per week, distributed between preparation activities and direct actions in the classroom, with remuneration that, without bonuses, in net values, barely reaches R\$ 3,000.00, due to social security discounts and legal taxes. Because of that, for them, it is of utmost importance to have another remunerated activity, in order to earn enough for their own survival and the survival of their families.

As we have already signaled, we verified that the devaluation of teaching labor isn't simply due to the income issue, but is also accentuated by a pretty intense daily workload taken up by other diverse work activities that are increasingly added to a great number of academic activities, such as: studying; giving lectures, including previously planning classes, creating lesson plans, drafting tests and activities, creating audiovisual material etc.; the praxis in the classroom, with an ever increasing number of students, and, later, correcting tests and essays; besides administrative activities, such as uploading students' grades and attendance frequency to the University server; participating in or creating seminars and academic meetings, an activity that used to be sporadic, but that nowadays happens almost daily; orienting scholarship holders from scientific initiation, teaching assistants, course conclusion papers; participating in different committees; assisting coordinators; research groups and laboratories; and participating in work and study groups.

In fact, the intensification of labor is reiterated often by the teachers interviewed. This experience reported by research subjects corroborate an extensive debate of contemporaneity, concerning the changes in perception of time and space notions, which seems to have been accelerated and compressed, as emphasized in the readings by Maia Filho *et al.* (2014).

Those authors highlight that time and space are socially constructed notions, determined by historical moment. In the context of globalized capitalism, that aforementioned change happens due to the disorganization of space and acceleration of time, resulting in the crumbling of the unit there was between those notions, shrinking the world to a sort of global village, without spatial barriers, whose time is so fast that humankind seems to exist only today, here, now, instantaneously.

From that context, understood by us as the apex of modernity, arise repercussions in all spheres of social life. To this text it is important to emphasize transformations in production relations, which have in Toyotism their privileged model for work organization, intensifying the time cycle of production and increasing workers' productivity, characterized as one of the most aggressive administration strategies to manage the crisis experienced by capital nowadays (ANTUNES, 2003).

In this sense, what marks the devaluation of work conditions experienced by the substitute teacher unique is that, at the same time that they are imprisoned in the classroom – in the terms of Lira Silva (2013) –, they must spread themselves thin to carry out extension and research activities as part of their social acknowledgement in the academic community, which increases their workload already intensified by the strong appeal of teaching activities. And this doesn't happen because of a university resolution. On the contrary, the university believes that the substitute teacher should mainly worry about the classroom. Their relationship with research is determined by macrostructural issues, such as being in sync with demands by research funding agencies, such as Capes, which disqualify the teacher who doesn't research as *unproductive*, therefore inadequate to perform full academic functions. In addition, the possibility of being hired as a permanent teacher in the future makes that an inevitable demand, because analysis of the professional resume and of scientific production is a fundamental requirement for a future selection.

Regarding the aforementioned work conditions, the substitute teachers interviewed highlight the government's lack of commitment to the teaching career, the instability of work relations, the cheapness of the teacher workforce, the fetishism of the condition of substitute teacher, as immediately indicated by the disposable contract (LIRA SILVA, 2013). It's a process of substituting ghosts, since the government's disregard toward public university reveals this strange paradox where the substitute is, in practice, a permanent teacher, except without the conditions that enable them to act as such. This fact can be noticed not only at the researched university, but – in the face of downsizing the need for teachers, a result of the productive restructuring of capital – at all state universities of Ceará, which lack, precisely, over 600 teachers, according to data from the National Union of Teachers at Higher Education Institutions (ANDES, in Portuguese) (2016).

Therefore, by portraying the scenario in which substitute teachers are inserted, the researched subjects summarized many criteria that characterize the substitute teacher as representative of fragile and precarious work conditions at a Brazilian public university in contemporaneity. This begins as soon as the teacher is hired, with the instability resulting from that hiring method, because although it establishes a formal bond, regulated by the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT, in Portuguese), their contract is, actually, a subcontract for precarious labor, which unleashes several hindrances to university life.

These hindrances happen, mainly, concerning obstacles to their continued teacher training; to the lack of definition of their teaching career, specifically at the university, which is chosen by the subjects due to strong affection and identification that captivate them; to physical and emotional fatigue, given the intense workload and successive and uncertain selections; to wage disparity, which clearly marks substitute teachers as an inferior category when compared to the group of permanent teachers.

In this sense, the substitute teacher, according to Lira Silva (2013), is a multipurpose worker, hired to teach classes, but judged, simultaneously, by the logic of “lecturism” and productivism; in turn, the permanent teacher is the specialized worker, who has, within their work conditions – although, to a degree, also precarious and equally productivity-focused –, the possibility of excellence, granted by the government, of being a teacher-researcher.

The reflex of the aforementioned governmental disregard and subsequent social rejection is that the university fits the “scrapping” of public entities, of which all public workers are targets. The lack of support experienced by the university matches the context of other state and federal public universities in Brazil. In this situation, in the majority of public universities, with the exception or exacerbation of one or other factor, basic work material may be lacking, such as chalk/marker pens, erasers, computer at departments; there may be decaying infrastructure and a landscape corroded by time and the action of nature; the building may lack adequate refrigeration, ventilation, or lighting; there may be leaks; the libraries aren’t always up to date or have an excess of reference material; blackboards may be in a poor state; laboratories may be old and damaged; desks may be broken and not anatomical; some spaces may lack lamps; the water fountains may be broken; rest rooms may be unusable; university cafeterias may

be out of order; the paving may be damaged; there may not be accessibility, internal or external, for disabled people; among other factors that have substantiated the “scrapping” of Brazilian public universities for decades and, to general regret, has only been worsened.

Overall, the condition of substitute teachers, seemingly, is seen as a sort of stepping stone – and one of the lowest stepping stones in the university teaching career, at that –, as an opportunity to achieve the level of permanent teacher, which, undoubtedly, offers better social protections when compared to “substitute” teachers. Thus:

*What does it mean to be a ‘substitute’ at University [...]? It means to build a training process with no guarantees to continue a project of your own training. You contribute to the student’s training, the other, but you’re insecure from the point of view of a continuing training project in your teaching career. Because it is an unstable job, where every two years you decide if you stay, if you don’t stay, going through new selections in a condition of unequal pay and work conditions. If you want to effectively be part of that process, you can’t read a book and say what the author said in the classroom, you have to build other processes. And then there is an intensification of your workload, because ‘damned if you do, damned if you don’t’. It’s kind of like that... The way of being a ‘substitute’ isn’t linear to describe, it’s a web of relations that now you’re making it, you’re closer to this space, now you get closer to the other [space]. But it’s all very intense! Everything’s very different, the work conditions, the objective dimensions of the work conditions. (TEACHER 3, our translation).*

*What I think is that there shouldn’t be substitute teachers, really. [...] I think the substitute teacher shouldn’t even cross anyone’s mind as a possibility. [Should they] Exist in what sense? Exist in the real sense of ‘substitute’: maternity leave, election period, when you can’t hire... then they should exist. But within a university, where the number of substitute teachers [...] if I recall correctly, last year, was equal to the number of ‘permanent’ teachers, that cannot exist! That shows complete neglect of this university, this education space, this Higher Education space! Shows neglect toward this institution, which should be a heritage, should be something that the entire society recognized as important. Because here [...], or in any other university with an exaggerated number of ‘substitutes’, it shows a disregard of policies, of government – no matter which government – disregard to this Higher Education. For me, it does, clearly! That is very clear in my head! (TEACHER 2, our translation).*

All remarks by the interviewees corroborate the concept of a Brazilian university in trouble, that is, in ruins, in crisis, in imminent risk of bankruptcy. As a more avid expression of this devaluation context, there are the substitute teachers,

who reveal the desire not to migrate to other Higher Education spaces because they are more interested in fighting for the regeneration of the public university space, due to its social relevance.

This regeneration is one of the strongest causes of the education struggle, the expansion of public, free, secular, live, high-quality university, for which so many Brazilian groups fight, such as Andes, who leads organized teachers' mobilization in the country; the institutions that represent workers, such as State and Federal Councils; National Student Executives and Associations for Teaching and Research; among other groups. The struggle is to fight, in addition to the expansion of university following those criteria, for the end of the privatization of Higher Education, whose biggest repercussions are the "tertiary high schools" and distance education, both real diploma factories, places of knowledge massification and dressage for the job market.

An interesting piece of data obtained from the research subjects was a certain identity between teacher and praxis, maybe because it is a public institution – data that deserve greater investigation. We interpret this concept of teachers not in a reformist perspective constructed around the system of capital, but in the viewpoint of the fight for abolition of the social system based on commercial logic. For that effect, the issue of organized activism is key, with the need to unify teachers' and students' movements so that, first, political pressure is maximized; and second, to raise awareness in the students so that they won't be deceived along with the rest of society. For example, in some circumstances, the media misrepresents strikes and demonstrations, trivializing those moments, as if these occasions meant, for teachers, resting, escaping work, or simply gratuitous chaos. It is, therefore, urgent for the teaching staff the task of inviting the students' participation in the fight for a cause that is legitimate for both groups: the fight against the capital's power in the university.

In this perspective, we analyze that teachers, although they don't have conditions to completely reject the logic of capital, since it is imposed with coercive force, shouldn't bow down to training for the market, which distorts instead of constructing the individual. Therefore, the classroom, research, extension and the political dimension must happen equitably in the university, components of human training.

#### 4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Considering the facts discussed, it seems evident that outsourcing processes, which indirectly encompass the substitute teacher, answer to a bigger strategy of the capital, especially in moments of crisis, because they enable the decrease of labor costs, the division of the working class, and the intensification of the workload, partly counterbalancing the process that leads to loss in accumulation and expansion of capital. Thus, we understand that, in practice, the substitute teacher is an outsourced teacher, and not a temporary one, since, in the current case, it is not an occasional and factual substitution, but a permanent policy to substitute permanent teachers.

The substitute teacher clearly illustrates the devaluation of teaching labor conditions in contemporary capitalism. This particular case of substitute teachers expresses that scenario through the huge dearth of permanent teachers in state universities in Ceará, in addition to the unjustifiable exaggeration in hiring substitute teachers at this university. Therefore, besides the lack of stability and wage losses for the substitute teacher, we end by noting that it is possible to witness, as well, a deeper break in the identification between these workers and the university, considerable distance of research and extension, the accumulation of academic tasks, which is probably closely related to the deficiency in these teachers' general life conditions.

We conclude, thus, by stating that it is urgent to position oneself against the elements that turn teaching labor precarious, which end up unfolding over life conditions. However, it is important to emphasize that a radical attitude is only feasible if assumed collectively; in turn, if carried out by a small group sporadically, the consequences will be, to say the least, discouraging.

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