

## **Parents' Visions and Strategies regarding the Schooling of Sons who are Soccer Trainees**

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**ABSTRACT – Parents' Visions and Strategies regarding the Schooling of Sons who are Soccer Trainees<sup>1</sup>.** This article describes the schooling strategies utilized by the parents of young (age range 10 – 24) soccer trainees and how these relate to the school itself. The results showed that parents and soccer trainees placed schooling in second place in favor of the sport. Therefore, they sought strategies and schools whose academic obligations were more flexible. Their actions were derived from an idea that schooling had greater time elasticity than sport professionalization. At school, this created tension and stigma regarding the soccer trainees and their parents, and showed that, at the institutional level, both the school and the soccer club were poorly structured for the demands of such a hybrid arrangement. **Keywords: Family. School. Dual Career. Soccer. Schooling.**

**RESUMO – Estratégias e Visões Familiares na Escolarização de Jovens Atletas.** O artigo descreve as estratégias de escolarização utilizadas pelas famílias de jovens atletas do futebol e como estas se relacionam com a instituição escolar. Os resultados mostram que as famílias e os atletas secundarizam a escolarização em benefício do futebol. Para isso, buscaram estratégias e instituições de ensino que flexibilizam as obrigações escolares. Suas ações partem de uma ideia de que a escolarização possui um tempo mais elástico do que a profissionalização no esporte. Tal concepção cria tensões e estigmas sobre os atletas e suas famílias na escola e evidenciam que, no plano institucional, tanto escola quanto clube estão pouco estruturados para as demandas de uma formação híbrida de estudantes-atletas. **Palavras-chave: Família. Escola. Dupla Carreira. Futebol. Escolarização.**

## Introduction

In the sociology of education, the relationship between parents and school is treated as a consolidated, well-structured debate, about which there is vast academic production. In the case of the sociology of sport, the theme of schooling for soccer trainees has also been advancing in recent years. However, as neither of these two sociological disciplines focuses on the great importance of the parent-sport-school triad, this article constitutes an effort to redress this knowledge gap.

The relationship between parents and school, already present in the inaugural works of this disciplinary subfield, is, today, one of the most debated issues in the sociology of education. Several studies have addressed the challenges linked to the role and the responsibility each bears in schooling in Brazil.

Regarding the role of parents in their children's education and their relationship with school, for a long time, the literature in the area focused on macro-social analyses in which parents and their behavior were viewed through social class determination. Due to being based on this limited approach, the parental action and their children's educational performance lacked a more consistent explanation of the variety of paths followed by each social class (Nogueira, 1995).

Seeking to overcome these limitations, several studies carried out in Brazil since the 1980s have begun to favor a micro-sociological approach much more concerned with the perception of specificities in parents in the same social class (Nogueira, 1995; Souza and Silva, 2011). Observing the dynamics and internal configurations more closely, researchers have come to realize the importance of this institution in children's schooling, in addition to the exclusively social bias (Nogueira, 1998).

Therefore, research papers have been discussing reflections on the relationship of parents with their children's schooling process, such as the following: Romanelli (2009a; 2009b; 2013); Nogueira (1998; 2005; 2006); Glória (2005; 2007); Setton (2002); Perez (2000; 2007); and Zago (1998; 2000). These micro-sociological studies have revealed the role of parents from different social strata in this process.

By pointing out strategies for material and symbolic investments in their children's schooling, the research emphasizes the meaning of studies concerning the different parental educational practices used to develop their schooling projects. The studies reinforce the understanding of these processes between parents and school as arising from complex configurations punctuated by combinations of various social fields that end up establishing a particular parental configuration in each class.

Almost all these studies address individuals and parents whose main aspiration lies in the educational project, realizing that there is a strong correlation between academic success and upward social mobility (Nogueira, 1995). Thus, children's education is a central element

of parents' projects. However, there are also parents whose educational projects are combined with other professional projects, in which schooling is not regarded as imperative. Among these projects, one may cite those that aspire to a sporting or artistic career, or simply seek entry to the employment market in unskilled positions.

Given that it is relatively well known that parents' strategies focus mainly on the educational project, how are such strategies built and executed in the case of parents whose schooling project competes with other training and concomitant projects? Highlighting this issue, the objective of this article is to understand how parents organize their children's schooling practices when engaged in a dual career, and how these actions influence their school trajectory and relationship with the school.

Those engaged in such a double career necessarily attend school, study and take tests, undergoing the normal school reality. At the same time, soccer requires daily training, competitions and travel. The demands of both institutions need to be properly managed concurrently, because the investments in the required knowledge converge in the same early phase of life.

Despite a certain disinterest on the part of the Brazilian State in the issue of schooling young soccer trainees (Rocha, 2017; Haas; Carvalho, 2018), the number of people involved is significant, although the data is fragmented and, in some cases, incomplete. According to the most reliable sources, *Raio-X do Futebol*, published annually by the Brazilian Soccer Confederation (CBF), and *Relatório Anual de Informações Sociais – RAIS* [Annual Social Information Report], published by the Ministério Público do Trabalho – MPT [Public Ministry of Labor], the country has approximately 550 soccer clubs with grassroots categories that host around 240,000 male youths in training programs. If we consider the 25 million males in this age range in the Brazilian population (IBGE, 2018), approximately 1% have this dual career profile.

National studies on the topic (Melo, 2010) are based on the premise that sport for the young can be an obstacle to schooling. In Brazil, sports training is perceived as a viable bet, as, even if it does not produce the desired result, it may be offset by investment in education. In this national scenario, the conflicting situation between sports training and schooling means that the cost of conciliation is, in general, borne by the student-soccer trainee and his parents, who should negotiate the club's demands directly with the school. This situation tends to aggravate the imbalance already existing in the Brazilian context, which tends to place greater weight on the responsibility of the parents to the detriment of the school and education system's responsibilities for the student's school success (Carnoy, 2009).

Very often, the investment made by parents is based on the belief that soccer is an opportunity for rapid upward social mobility, when, in fact, the soccer market in Brazil shows that the number of jobs available is much less the labor supply for it. In addition to the restricted mar-

ket for upcoming soccer players, the number of vacancies offering high salaries is very limited. In fact, within the soccer market, the few teams (about 40) that pay really good salaries are usually those in the first and second divisions. Most of the other teams pay very low salaries, and often the contract terms are only three months, just for the duration of regional championship disputes. Data released by the CBF in 2018 show that of the 18,118 professional players registered in 2010, 8,944 earned a minimum salary or less, that is, up to a maximum of R\$ 600 (at 28/07/2021 exchange rate, US\$ 116). Despite these facts, the mainstream media often only highlights the success stories, giving the false impression soccer is an easy route to wealth and social ascension.

Based on the understanding that the conciliation between sport and school can be configured through conflicting intricacies, the intention of the article is to point out possible ways to understand the choices made by these parents in the education of their offspring, the strategies used and the relationships that are developed between this institution and the schools.

## Methodology

The field research was conducted between 2015 and 2017. It was carried out with 5 sets of parents with young sons enrolled in a particular Rio de Janeiro soccer club (at the time, disputing the first division in the national championship). The trainees were engaged in training on a daily basis. Consequently, their parents were subject to the institution's influence on their routines. The club was chosen because it was one of three in Rio de Janeiro State that awarded soccer training club certificates. In addition, it was the only one that allowed research activities at its facilities, as well as providing the researchers with contacts and logistical support.

The option to analyze only trainees from the same club was due to the fact they were all submitted to similar sports training conditions and the same training routines. These two elements are important variables in the schooling process of these student-sportsmen (Melo, 2016). The trainees selected were in two age ranges, 15-16 and 17-18, as it was in these that, according to agents in the field of soccer, the chances of professionalization are defined, and it is when young people must decide with their parents whether to pursue a soccer career or another one. The students aged 15-18, in theory, also placed them in the final years of schooling. In view of this, the choice of this age group was due to being the phase in which one can observe tension in the formation of individual and parental strategies concerning whether to invest further in the sport or in education (Epiphany, 2002).

In order to understand how schooling strategies promoted by parents and their sons were established, data about the training routine, session lengths, competitions, length of the school day, free time/leisure activities, and the parents' own school trajectories were mapped. Despite daily contact with several trainees and parents at the club, five

sets of parents were selected. This sample size was chosen due to the impossibility of following more parents for an extended period of time in a participatory, systematic way. The parents were chosen based on the contacts in the exploratory phase in the research field. This meant that the sample was limited to parents who, during the research at the club, demonstrated willingness to participate in the study. It was not, therefore, a random or predefined sample, as the selection of the data was determined by the researchers' negotiations with the actors in the field. Attempts were also made to interview close family members (siblings), relatives (uncles/aunts, cousins, grandparents), in addition to those considered extended family members. To learn about the institutional actions regarding the schooling, in addition to the interviews with the trainees and their parents/guardians, interviews were also carried out with the school teachers coordinators and directors, as well as the club's social workers and psychologists.

The selection of parents had limitations, which, to some extent, decreased the external validity of the study. However, in the case of the study of the parents' educational backgrounds and the close monitoring of their routines, it was necessary to work with those open to revealing their biographies and routines in the management of their sons' education and soccer training. They agreed to be communicative and also to allow the researchers to be present during their daily routines. Although this choice criterion necessarily led to some bias, as they had been made aware of this beforehand, the parents were accompanied throughout the research process, and it would certainly not have been possible to reach this micro-sociological level of analysis without their close collaboration.

## **Parents' Own Schooling Backgrounds**

The relationship of the trainees' parents with the school and their perceptions of this institution were configured as a product of their socialization experiences, mainly in the educational field, together with any involvement in that of soccer. This meant that the schooling experience of the trainees was structured through the intersection of these two fields, in which parents involved in soccer ended up influencing their perception of the school and the goals related to schooling.

One of the structuring elements found in the parents' soccer projects was the gradual disinvestment in the student's routines and school obligations in favor of the soccer routines with a view to professionalization. The analyses could explain this favoring of sports routines to the detriment of schoolchildren, as a consequence of parents that, throughout their history, had had family members with disrupted education or little contact with people with a high level of education, among other reasons. However, this was not the predominant factor in the parents surveyed.

The data revealed that, of the 5 sets of parents, 4 had among their family members a predominance of individuals of at least high school

Parents' Visions and Strategies regarding the Schooling of Sons who are Soccer Trainees level, that is, 12 years of schooling (Marques, Moreira, Torres and Almeida parents). Only in the Guimarães family was there a predominance of members with only basic (age range 6 - 17) schooling, or had never studied. The charts below provide a more systematic view of this situation.

**Chart 1 – Marques Family's Schooling**

Family members' schooling	Father Rufus	Mother Bianca	Maternal Grandfather	Maternal Grandmother	Paternal Grandfather	Paternal Grandmother	Uncle Celso	Uncle Humberto	Aunt Regina	Aunt Edna
	Primary education incomplete	Advanced education complete	High School education complete	Primary education complete	---	---	Advanced education complete	High School education complete	High School education complete	High School education complete

Source: Correia (2018, p. 291).

**Chart 2 – Moreira Family's Schooling**

Family members' schooling	Father Marcos	Mother Carolina	Maternal Grandfather	Maternal Grandmother	Paternal Grandfather	Paternal Grandmother	Stepfather	Godmother	Stepmother
	High School complete	High School complete	High School complete	Primary education complete	High School complete	Advanced education complete	High School complete	High School complete	High School complete

Source: Correia (2018, p. 292).

**Chart 3 – Almeida Family's Schooling**

Family members' schooling	Father Roberto	Mother Marta	Maternal Grandfather	Maternal Grandmother	Paternal Grandfather	Paternal Grandmother	Uncle Mauro	Uncle Sebastião	Aunt Mônica
	Advanced education complete	High School complete	High School complete	High School complete	Advanced education complete				

Source: Correia (2018, p. 292).

**Chart 4 – Torres Family's Schooling**

Family members' schooling	Father Tomaz	Mother Elisa	Maternal Grandfather	Maternal Grandmother	Paternal Grandfather	Paternal Grandmother	Uncle Adão	Uncle Claudio
	High School complete	High School complete	Primary education incomplete	Primary education incomplete	---	---	High School complete	High School complete

\*Elisa's 6 brothers have advanced education complete.

Source: Correia (2018, p. 291).

**Chart 5 – Guimarães Family’s Schooling**

Family members' schooling	Father Henrique	Mother Suzana	Maternal Grandfather	Maternal Grandmother	Paternal Grandfather	Paternal Grandmother	Uncle José	Aunt Magda
	Primary education incomplete	High School complete	Primary education complete	Primary education complete	Never studied	Primary education complete	High School complete	High School complete

\*Henrique has two more brothers (one with high school complete and the other, basic education complete)

Source: Correia (2018, p. 291).

Although the families were taken as a nucleus with specific diversified realities, with regard to education, almost all (except the Guimarães) had family members with more schooling than the average for the Brazilian population and that of Rio de Janeiro. According to PNAD (2018), the average number of years of schooling in Brazil was approximately 9 years, which in theory, means, basic education complete. In the case of the Rio de Janeiro population, taking the same base date, the average was approximately 10 years. Utilizing these data as a basis for comparison with the parents' educational backgrounds, as already mentioned, 4 of the couples had an average schooling level higher than that observed in Brazil and Rio de Janeiro. The data allowed affirmation that the parents in the Marques, Torres, Almeida and Moreira families had no evidence in their school records of repetition or failure.

Despite some already existing variations due to the parents' specific trajectories and standards of living, essentially, all the parents a) viewed schooling as long-term and of uncertain return; b) made school routines more flexible to accommodate soccer; c) chose the educational institution according to its compatibility with soccer; d) reduced their demands and expectations about school results; e) like their sons, did not feel comfortable in the school environment.

### **Schooling of Trainees and Educational Practices**

In these parents' relationships with their sons' education, one could see from observation of their fields of possibilities in soccer and school, strategies and actions were developed, ending up making school objectives secondary to those of the sport. This did not mean, however, that the educational project of these youths and their parents was abandoned. In fact, even though it was no longer considered a priority investment at the time, schooling continued in parallel to the professionalization project in soccer, with appropriate adjustments to the main project.

Parents know that basic schooling is a legal imperative for all individuals between 4 and 17, so, even if they wanted to abandon school obligations, they would need to bear the legal responsibilities for such an act. In addition, soccer clubs, supported by law, require regular registration so that these young people can join the grassroots categories.

However, the very same State that imposes mandatory school enrollment does not provide, through public policies, different conditions for the schooling of certain specific groups of young people, including those who are sports trainees.

In order to reconcile the two activities, all parents utilized strategies to make school routines and those at home more flexible. One of the flexibility mechanisms identified in the research was the enrollment of the son in a school in partnership with the soccer club. The parents analyzed stated that the choice of the club's partner school was related to eminently sporting intentions and not to factors linked to its academic performance. When asked about the reasons for choosing these schools, there was unanimity.

E: Why does your son study in this school? What was your criterion to enroll him here?

Bianca: I enrolled Bernardo in this school because it caters for many trainees. It's a school in partnership with a club, and it understands the reality of these boys. Knowing that they are dealing with trainees helps them in this relationship with soccer.<sup>2</sup>

Elisa: When Murilo came here I contacted various schools, but I also came to the club to find out if it had a school to recommend. They gave me two options, saying they were public schools in the region that maintained a partnership with the club. For this reason, the club could accompany them, and the school gave the trainees different treatment, especially regarding absence. I then set out to decide which of the two options would inspire more confidence.<sup>3</sup>

Henrique: Paulo has always studied in a public school, but, when he started to train hard at the club, I started having a problem with him regarding his tests, at times even missing them. Even though it was a public school, the principal was very hard on Paulo because of his absences. Talking to other parents and to the club that had started noticing his bad grades, I was recommended school X, which was a partner of the club and followed the boys' progress.<sup>4</sup>

In all the responses, it was possible to perceive that the change of school and choice of institution for study were guided by criteria related to the needs of the soccer career, resulting from strategies carried out by the parents to better reconcile the double career.

It is to be noted that, in Brazilian education, despite the increase in the number of school places and the access of many more young people to higher levels of education (high school and advanced), there is still a high degree of inequality of access. Ribeiro (2009) showed that, for generations, through the children, the Brazilian education system has continued to reaffirm the inequality of educational opportunities according to the social strata. This finding helps to reinforce the notion that, even with the boost in valuation of education via more dissemination mechanisms, the country still has pockets featuring difficult access and progression due to numerous issues. Recently, Brazilian education has been producing a process Cury (2008) called "exclusion-

ary inclusion”, in which, although more and more young people are being included in the system, this action is carried out in a precarious, unequal, irregular manner. Thus, problems, such as, retention, school dropout, as well as low content proficiency, are a reality.

In the club’s partner school(s), it was possible for trainees to reschedule tests coinciding with trips, to be granted leave of absence for training, or to receive complementary material to cover long absences due to tournaments. In addition, the school allowed delayed arrivals and early departures as long as the club provided written justification.

As Ballion (1986), Nogueira (2013) and Fialho (2012) affirmed, the parents’ choice of educational establishment with the characteristics required by them display the objectives and schooling practices sought. According to Ball, Gewirtz and Bowe (1995), the parents, influenced by the structure of capital (cultural, social, economic and symbolic) available, and by their beliefs based on these, develop a different motivation for choosing the educational establishment. Those parents more engaged in the schooling project and with greater knowledge of the education system tend to carry out a meticulous research process, which includes criteria such as: the results obtained, the structure, public served, the teaching staff qualifications, and the pedagogy applied.

When identifying these mechanisms, one could see that the main concern of parents was not guided by strictly academic criteria, such as the pedagogy, teaching staff, curriculum or school structure, but by the ways school routines were made more flexible for the soccer trainees. Only the Torres family mentioned any concern with educational issues when choosing the educational establishment, but, even so, the priority criterion lay in reconciling the soccer activities. In this research, the choices had a more practical character, usually found in parents with little knowledge about the education system and/or little engaged in their children’s schooling.

The decision about the school was only one of the elements that characterized this set of flexibilizations carried out by the parents. In the domestic unit, it was possible to see other mechanisms that had been developed so that schooling would not decisively interfere with the development of the soccer routines. Thus, school accompaniment of, for example, homework, study hours, reading of books, among other activities, were not characterized in the trainees’ daily lives as common practices. Domestic investment was not considered by family members as important preventive actions to avoid future difficulties that could compromise the achievement of good school results. In fact, extra study was only required as a remedy to improve below-average grades.

It was not uncommon for parents and/or other family members, at decisive moments in the sports season, to do the trainees’ homework for them, for instance. In order to mitigate the exhaustion incurred in training and competitions, responsibility for it was taken over.

Bianca: Look ... I’m going to tell you the truth because I don’t like to lie. Many times when Bernardo is tired because of a very busy day at the club,

I do his homework. There is usually not much, but, whenever I can, I end up doing it for him. In my opinion, homework often gets in the way.<sup>5</sup>

Roberto: At home we are a team. My wife doesn't really like this idea of doing our son's homework, but sometimes he really can't. The boy comes home very tired. He trains in the morning, studies in the afternoon, and, in the evening he can't even stand up.<sup>6</sup>

Henrique: I think they send a lot of homework. I think they don't need to send anything. He does everything to do with school at school. When there is something we need to help him conduct research, we use the Internet. He does his utmost to deliver his homework so that he doesn't get a bad grade. Unfortunately, I don't know how to do a lot of this research stuff on Internet.<sup>7</sup>

This active position of parents in relation to school duties demonstrates, as in the studies by Nogueira (1995), that there is little chance of parental omission in relation to the schooling of children. Rather, there are processes of adapting school life to the project prioritized by the parents. However, we cannot consider these parents like those classified by the sociology of education as engaged in the schooling of their children. Educationally oriented parents usually act in a preventive manner to avoid future difficulties that may compromise achievement and award of the desired school certificates. In order to avoid this scenario, "[...] parents' investment is made mainly in the form of hard work and expenditure of energy and time, whereas pecuniary expenses are merely secondary" (Nogueira, 1995, p. 17).

Therefore, parents' negative view of homework is evident. It is often seen as a villain that drains the time and effort of young trainees by preventing them from resting when at home. This position is different from that of parents engaged in the schooling process, in which homework is seen as an everyday phenomenon, incorporated as a traditional practice and the main factor of parent-school interaction (Carvalho, 2000).

For the trainees' parents, the organization of time and domestic activities is not linked to the needs and priorities imposed by the school. The flexibility of school routines both at home and in school was a structuring element for the development of soccer projects. All the parents sought this flexibility as a means of reconciling the two activities, giving priority to sports development. Regarding this, both Bianca (Marques family) and Marta (Almeida family) stressed that, in some situations, their sons missed classes so that they could rest from training.

Another important factor regarding the schooling practices was the low presence of family members in the school environment. Among the family groups monitored, Moreira and Guimarães could not say for sure where the school was located, nor whether it was state or municipal, and not even the name. In the other three, there was some relationship between the parents and the school, although this was developed mainly through the educational institution's initiative to solve problems of discipline and performance. During the monitoring of these three sets of parents, it was noticed that they rarely visited the school on

commemorative dates (Mother's Day, Father's Day, June Fest). In fact, the few meetings in which they participated constituted their main action in the relationship with the school, although it should be noted that this situation is not peculiar to these parents.

This distancing of parents from the school space was commented on by the administrative and teaching staff of the schools where the trainees studied.

Coordinator of School Z: The parents don't help much either. They leave the boys very free. You call them once, twice, but they don't come. Then, at the end of the year, the surprise comes that they've failed. And they even ask why they weren't warned. So, I conclude that they do not value education. Their boys are left without guidance. They just want to know about soccer.<sup>8</sup>

Teacher at School X: Joel (Moreira family) is a student who's often absent, and when he comes he doesn't produce much. His grades have been dropping month after month.

E: What does the school do about it? Does his father participate in anything in the boy's school life?

Teacher at School X: I've never seen him. He's never called or sought to know anything about Joel. If anyone from his family passed me in the street, I wouldn't even know it<sup>9</sup>.

In having a weak relationship with school, these parents were often not fully aware of their sons' performance and any relationship problems they may have been facing. For these parents, the relationship with the school was still affected by a vision of a 'sanctuary', cloistered, protected from parental interference, sought only when their boys deviated from the expected pattern of results and behavior (Migeot-Alvarado, 2000).

When comparing the monitoring exercised by parents with regard to soccer routines, one realizes that the same parents were systematically present in their children's training and competitions, even if they took place in other cities. Willingness to talk to their son's coaches, as well as to seek strategies from the psychologists and physiologists to improve performance were also verified throughout the research. The active positioning in the boys' soccer activities, and as protagonists in their sports development, were opposed to a passive stance towards the school activities. Those responsible for the trainees sought preventive measures for sports development in relation to the club's professionals, something they did not do in relation to the school.

The attitude of these parents in relation to their sons' schooling does not mean disregarding the importance of school or the need to obtain school certificates. The parents understood, albeit in a diffuse way, how social games were structured and how school and soccer time requirements were configured. The parents socialized in this sports field perceived that professionalization opportunities had time limitations:

Henrique: Soccer is a question of moment. If you are not 100% focused on soccer at the moment the opportunity appears in front of you, it is over! It is going to knock on the other guy's door. Soccer does not have room for mistakes. The chance is missed. You will cry for the rest of your life. So, you have to grab the chance and do everything right, invest everything<sup>10</sup>.

Bianca: The soccer career is very short, and the chance to become a professional is very much in the 18 - 19 age range. If, after 20, it has not yet become reality, you will stay wandering around in a small club, and maybe not even become a professional. Soccer has an expiry date. School doesn't<sup>11</sup>.

Elisa: I invest in 2 things, school and soccer, but I know that, through education, he can go to university whenever he wants. Now, to become a soccer player, he only has this little window. If he does not show talent, he'll be left outside, even the basic category<sup>12</sup>.

The trainees and their parents revealed they were aware there was constant assessment of the training and recognized that excellent performance was always demanded. This pressure for better performance directly influenced the allocation of time and attention to the soccer project. This showed that the configuration of the soccer program did not allow the trainee to be absent at a certain point in the training, seek new paths, and later resume the activities. Furthermore, it was a conscious element in the parents' strategy that the rewards, material and symbolic of a successful sports project tended to exceed the gains to be derived from a project based solely on schooling.

In the case of school, these youths were aware that ultimately schooling projects could be carried out at any time in life, without physical or intellectual impediments to achieve them, unlike soccer in which technical performance and career development depended on age and physical vigor. Therefore, the parents who developed soccer projects understood that school was a project that could be postponed. According to these experiences acquired by the coexistence of the sports field, parents developed different strategies for the schooling.

## Parents-School-Project Relationship

Regarding the representations parents made about education, each in his/her own way, there was unanimous emphasis on the importance of school as an instrument of upward social mobility, social emancipation. The value of what all the parents broadly called education was, however, accompanied by ambiguous speech about the awards the school could offer.

Henrique: School is very important. I couldn't study and I know what a difference it makes. I would like both Pedro and Paulo to study, but each knows the path that is best for him to follow. There are other paths besides school. They're not easy, but they can be followed<sup>13</sup>.

Elisa: Nowadays the way things are I don't even know what to say to him when he complains that I demand a lot of him at school. It's because even schooling is no longer a guarantee of anything<sup>14</sup>.

Roberto: I teach and I know that school is important. I defend what I do (laughter), but, just because of working in this, and knowing education as I do, I know that you have to dedicate yourself a lot and give up a lot to get something from school. I have many friends who went to university with me and are unemployed<sup>15</sup>.

Marcos: I have a lot of friends who went to university after they stopped playing, and I think it's really great. I always had a plan to do something else when I stopped playing, but it didn't work. I stayed only at high school level. I think school is important, but, for those who are in soccer like Joel, I see that the chance of earning more and in less time is greater. He's there, and suddenly he'll take off and earn more for the rest of his life than with a university degree<sup>16</sup>.

Bianca: We study because we need to. We know that, to have a better job, university can help, but like this you often invest a lot in a university education and end up not using what you studied. I, for example, went to business school, and what good did it do? I became a saleswoman for a firm<sup>17</sup>.

The statements, while highlighting the importance of education, also showed feelings of distrust about the return on school investment. Within this perspective based on uncertainty, the parents could be grouped into two lines of thought about education.

The first group, consisting of the Moreira, Guimarães and Marques parents, said they considered schooling an important element, but that it was not necessarily the only path to success. In these parents, there prevailed a very diffuse notion of the mechanisms operating in the education system, and of the statistical relationships among increased schooling, occupation and income. Along with this, in the case of the Marques family, the school education the mother, father and maternal grandmother had received were not determining factors in the profession they exercised or in their earnings. In the case of the Moreira and Guimarães parents, it was seen that entry into the labor market did not depend directly on school education, and, especially in the case of the Guimarães, entry had occurred prior to the completion of any educational level.

The second group, formed of the Torres and Almeida parents, was skeptical about the school awards. They knew there was a strong correlation between education and income, but had doubts as to whether education effectively translated into employability and financial return. This occurred in the families that had a significant number of members working in activities related to their academic background and had at least partial knowledge of the functioning of the education system. Recognizing these drawbacks, they regarded schooling as something important, but the structure of opportunities in Brazilian education imposed on them a series of uncertainties that, ultimately, could mean a diploma without an employability guarantee.

Despite the differences in thinking between these two groups in terms of reasoning that established a tone of distrust of the awards arising from schooling, it was possible to observe in all the parents a posi-

tion in which the cost of schooling was considered high and the gains/benefits of this activity doubtful, often redeemable only after a long-term investment. For this reason, many parents viewed the investment of time and financial resources in school as something uncertain and costly. It is noteworthy that these perceptions about investment-risk-return are in line with Raymond Boudon's theses on parents' different educational investments in relation to their social class. According to Boudon, as Nogueira (2013) had argued, the risk sensitivity varies according to the parents' social position, because the cost and the benefit (contribution of schooling to maintaining and/or ascending in relation to the current position) also vary depending on this position. The higher cost and the comparatively lower benefit obtained by parents of a lower social level, lead them to a lower risk tolerance in school investment (Nogueira, 2013). In this sense, for these parents, the cost-benefit ratio associated with investment in sport was more promising than that associated exclusively with schooling.

The way these parents saw the scope of their possibilities in the schooling process had a close correlation with the status of their sons in the field of soccer. Observation about these fields is always constructed through a relational process in which various structures of opportunities are identified, analyzed and classified by individuals on the basis of their social experiences and beliefs (Velho, 2003). These parents' views and beliefs about the social opportunities promoted by schooling were directly influenced by their sons' perceptions of success in soccer. These youths, at the time of the research, were on successful soccer training trajectories. In fact, these trajectories and the way their school trajectories were developing, also fostered a set of beliefs and values that formed perceptions about how far they thought they could reach through schooling or soccer. The decisions were based on the experience and beliefs accumulated by their parents.

Of the five sets of parents, in three (Torres, Almeida and Marques) the young trainees had never failed. The trainees themselves and their parents also stated that, throughout both the schooling and the training there had never been any disciplinary issues. In the case of the other two sets (Moreira and Guimarães), the trainees had presented failures.

In the schooling, regardless of failure or not, one could see that some elements brought their school trajectories closer. One of them occurred in the option of parents to change schools due to the needs and routines of soccer. These changes made it difficult for the trainees to create emotional bonds and a sense of belonging to their schools (Bru-neira, 2016).

In some cases, the trainees' comments on their school structures showed that they were very different from each other. The reports below allowed us to understand the impact of these changes on the school routines.

Murilo (student): When I came to Rio de Janeiro I was in the 6th year, I think. What I remember very well was that the subject material I start-

ed to teach here at school was very different from that in Bahia State. In mathematics and Portuguese, I had already seen everything they had taught here, but geography and history were organized in another way. I was quite confused in the beginning<sup>18</sup>.

Bernardo (student): The schools here in Rio de Janeiro, the public ones, are different from the public schools in Ribeirão Preto. Here the academic periods are bimonthly and there, at least in my school, they were quarterly. So, when I came in the middle of the year, I ended up not receiving my 2nd bimonthly mark, because there wasn't one. My mother had to go to the school to try to solve this problem<sup>19</sup>.

These situations ended up causing discontinuous school trajectories in certain contexts that created a low school expectation, especially as many of these moves to another school were made within the school year due to opportunities arising in soccer.

**Chart 6 – Number of Changes of School per Family**

5-Year Period					
Family	Marques	Moreira	Almeida	Torres	Guimarães
No. of Schools	5	4	3	3	3

Source: Correia (2018, p. 302).

Allied to this problem of changes of school and a perception of other occupational paths other than via schooling, there was also the construction of a student-sportsman stereotype. This labeling marked the image of these young people in the school environment, which could be positive among colleagues, and negative among teachers and other school agents, as evidenced by Da Conceição (2014). The existence of discourses and negative perceptions about the activities developed in sport were explained at various moments when interviewing school agents in the three schools.

Director of School X: These days it takes a lot of money to pursue a career in soccer. The boys think everything will turn out alright, that they will be a Neymar. However, we know this is rare. The fame and the money are very seductive, but they place no value on school. We see little or no appreciation of what school means in life. It is just in one or another that does. [...] What we observe is that soccer is in first place and so the school faces unfair competition<sup>20</sup>.

Director of School Z: The problem with soccer trainees here at school is that they think this sport will work out well for them, but we know that only a minority will make it. However, they don't think so. So many do not want to study at all. They miss class a lot. Moreover, some think that, just because they have entered the club [name] at the basic level, they are already professionals. Joel is an example of this. We have difficult cases here, but he is undoubtedly the most difficult<sup>21</sup>.

Teacher (2) of School Y: The students who come from soccer have that profile that we already know, right ... They want to do very little. They think that, because they are at the basic level at the club, they are the owners of the school. They always wonder why they need to study this or that, and some are undisciplined and lazy<sup>22</sup>.

The statements show a series of labels constructed by school agents about student-soccer trainees. The main problem is the so-called Pygmalion effect (Rosenthal; Jacobson, 1986) with the creation of a stigma that, among others, reflect teachers and school director's low expectations of these youths.

According to Goffman (2005), "The term stigma was created by de Geeks to refer to corporal signs with which they sought to show something extraordinary or bad about the moral status of those who presented them" (p. 5). Based on this, we can conclude that individuals who flee from normative moral conduct are branded and become victims of stigma. In contemporary societies, the marks of stigmas go beyond the physical aspect and spread to symbolic fields related to behavior and identities constructed by individuals. Thus, stigma can also be related to behavior, language, ways of dressing and lifestyles (Castro, 2011).

As the school is a microcosm of society, in this space we can visualize analogous situations linked to the construction of classification, labeling and exclusionary mechanisms. Those who do not fit the models recommended by the school and imposed by the education system acquire a brand, are recognized in the school institution by characteristics alien to this space, and directly related to activities and life trajectory from outside the school.

In this research, teachers and educational agents showed the comparison between student-soccer trainees with an idealized student, who for them, regardless of circumstances, needs to be within the pattern created by themselves. In this sense, the model student from whom, according to the teachers, the trainees distanced themselves, valued study as the main path. When teachers and educational agents pay attention only to attributes that are within the pattern created for this particular group, the possibility of the subject being seen by attributes that may not be within their expectations, albeit equally legitimate for the school space.

When this happens, the student-soccer trainee feels forced to devote more effort to obtaining a result equal to those of other students. In case of failure, stigma is reinforced for both himself and the school agents. The problem with this stigma is that the relationship between the trainee and his parents with the school is harmed even further, as shown by the following trainees' reports:

Joel: When I arrived here at this school, I tried not to say that I was a soccer player. It was to avoid any problems. I train at club [name], and many of my friends say that they scoff at the trainees. I'm trying to keep away from this<sup>23</sup>.

Bernardo: Some teachers like to expose us. They do it right in the middle of the class to humiliate us. They say we like to show off that we will earn much more money than them. We just keep quiet. We let them talk to themselves<sup>24</sup>.

In the follow-up, it was possible to notice a negative view of student-trainees, mainly at School Z where the Moreira, Guimarães and

Torres sons were enrolled. The school board complained a lot about the trainees complaining, as they did not like to study. The question was: Only them? School agents, not realizing the intrinsic logic that guided the parents' behavior, uttered phrases that disqualified parents approving their sons' schooling.

The manifestation of stigma in student- soccer trainees is a serious problem that affects their performance and the parents' relationship with the school. Perez (2000) observed that, if parents' attitudes were contrary to the school's prescriptions, these were labeled, interpreted and reinforced the stigma: "[...] parents do not value their children's studies. They do not follow their schooling. They are not interested" (p. 134). From the school's point of view, any behavior that is not connected with what the institution considers expected, means the family is dysfunctional and has little appreciation of education (Ribeiro; Andrade, 2006).

The monitoring of parents in their relationship with schools leads one to understand that the dialogue between the two is ridden with dissonance and tensions among divergent, contradictory, confrontational logic: on the one hand, the school that views schooling as a central element of social development and the best chance of social ascension; on the other, parents of trainees who see the possibility of postponing the schooling project. Thus, communication channels are not created in such a way that, through dialogue, it would be possible to understand the teacher/director discourse and that of the students participating in the educational process.

## **Final Considerations**

The analyses sought to demonstrate that the parents' investment in their sons' education was secondary to those in soccer. With regard to school, some young trainees made reference to the relative success of family members through schooling, following their parents' positive example. The positive lead encouraged the trainees and other family members to keep the school project alive, but treating it as secondary to the position reached in the soccer career in a highly prestigious club.

In this equation, they contributed to the favoring of soccer, the structures of opportunities experienced in the school and the sports trajectory of the parents and the trainees themselves, which, over time, consolidated a belief system. This system, ever dynamic, indicated the parents for whom the sport in question constituted a broader, more structured range of possibilities, according to their points of view and the success their children attained in this sport. Therefore, they made choices for the benefit of the sport through a set of strategies to make school routines more flexible.

The choices made by parents and their sons reinforced the analyses made by Boudon about the costs and benefits they foresaw in the implementation of their projects. Always seeking as a priority to extract the greatest advantage at the lowest possible cost, the parents engaged

in different practices to reconcile sport and school. In this sense, elements, such as social origin and socioeconomic level, constituted an important characteristic in the compression of these choices.

The focus on a professional soccer career did not exclude the idea of basic schooling that could lead to minimal qualification to occupy some kind of ordinary job. However, due to the soccer project, schooling was regarded as an activity that should be carried out with a low level of dedication. Schooling, in case of failure, could be postponed. In contrast, the temporality of training for professionalization in soccer required dedication and success according to the age of the trainee in his category. The maxim that can be drawn from the parents' perception is that soccer *does not wait*. The prioritization of the soccer project often led school agents to develop stigmas about student-trainees, and regarded this priority as neglect and omission on the part of parents and other family members dazzled by soccer. Finally, it seemed that the school still dealt with an abstract student, and the production of labeling or stigmas about student-trainees did not seem to be aimed exclusively at these students.

Received on 5 October 2020

Approved on 11 August 2021

## Notes

- 1 This work was funded by Faperj-CNE; from CNPq and CAPES.
- 2 Bianca, Bernardo's mother. Marques family. Interviewed 12/03/2015
- 3 Elisa, Murilo's mother. Torres family. Interviewed 20/10/2015
- 4 Henrique, Paulo's father. Guimarães family. Interviewed 20/03/2017
- 5 Bianca, Bernardo's mother. Marques family. Interviewed 12/03/2015
- 6 Roberto, Diego's father. Almeida family. Interviewed 11/04/2016
- 7 Henrique, Paulo's father. Guimarães family. Interviewed 20/03/2017
- 8 Joint interview with the director and coordinator of School Z. Interviewed 29/08/2016
- 9 Interview with a teacher from School X. Interviewed 21/11/2016
- 10 Henrique, Paulo's father. Guimarães family. Interviewed 20/03/2017
- 11 Bianca, Bernardo's mother. Marques family. Interviewed 12/03/2015
- 12 Interview with Elisa, Murilo's mother. Torres family. Interviewed 20/10/2015
- 13 Henrique, Paulo's father. Guimarães family. Interviewed 20/03/2017
- 14 Elisa, Murilo's mother. Torres family. Interviewed 20/10/2015
- 15 Roberto, Diego's father. Almeida family. Interviewed 11/04/2016
- 16 Marcos, Joel's father. Família Moreira. Interviewed 09/08/2015
- 17 Bianca, Bernardo's mother. Marques family. Interviewed 12/03/2015
- 18 Murilo. Torres family. Interviewed 25/05/2016
- 19 Bernardo. Marques family. Interviewed 20/10/2015

20 Director of the municipal School X. Interviewed 15/06/2016.

21 Director and coordinator of School Z. Interviewed 29/08/2016

22 Teacher (1) at School Y. Interviewed 12/10/2016

23 Informal conversation with Joel of the Moreira family. Interviewed 08/08/2016.

24 Informal conversation with Bernardo of the Marques family. Interviewed 15/05/2016.

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Editor-in-charge: Luís Armando Gandin

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