

The career of teachers in Paraná and deprofessionalization strategies: the “undergraduate teacher” case

*A Carreira dos professores no Paraná e as estratégias de desprofissionalização:
o caso do “docente acadêmico”*

*La trayectoria docente en Paraná y las estrategias de desprofesionalización:
el caso del “docente académico”*

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Abstract: This article is part of a research project investigating the impact of neoliberal guidelines on education policies. It focuses on temporary positions in the Paraná state school system under the streamlined selection process (PSS) notices. The authors identified a segment that had not yet been studied: the group of “undergraduate teachers” composed of students who have not yet completed a teaching degree. This is a significant subgroup with its own characteristics within the set of temporary teachers hired through the PSS to work in Basic Education. The research is a case study, based on document analysis, using as sources the PSS/PR public selection notices from 2008 to 2025, as well as information relevant to the State Secretariat of Education available on the Transparency Portal of the state of Paraná. The researchers compared the sources chronologically, identifying the periods of increased hiring within the subgroup. Subsequently, they performed an analytical study to examine the consolidation process of this subcategory and its potential implications for the education provided by the state public school system. The study found that the hiring of these teachers by the state school system tends to have various consequences: devaluation of education professionals, given the entry of workers who are not yet qualified; changes in career structure, contributing to the fragmentation of the teaching staff due to varying contractual conditions and salaries; intensified unequal competition among those seeking teaching positions; and flexibility in training requirements, which may be detrimental to students.

Keywords: Educational policies; Teaching career; Temporary contract; Undergraduate teacher.

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Resumo: Este artigo constitui uma das temáticas de pesquisa que investiga reflexos de diretrizes neoliberais em políticas da educação. Enfoca os vínculos temporários na rede de ensino do estado do Paraná na modalidade dos editais de Processo Seletivo Simplificado (PSS). As autoras localizaram um segmento ainda não estudado: o grupo dos “docentes acadêmicos integrado por estudantes que ainda não concluíram uma Licenciatura. Trata-se de um subgrupo significativo e com características próprias, no conjunto dos docentes temporários contratados via PSS para atuação na Educação Básica. A pesquisa desenvolveu-se na modalidade de estudo de caso, com base em análise documental, tendo como fontes, os editais do PSS/PR dos anos de 2008 a 2025, bem como de informações pertinentes à Secretaria de Estado de Educação disponíveis no Portal da Transparência do estado do Paraná. As fontes foram cotejadas pelo critério cronológico, identificando-se os momentos de incremento das contratações do subgrupo. Após, desenvolveu-se o trabalho analítico, visando o processo de consolidação dessa subcategoria e possíveis consequências na educação ofertada pela rede de ensino pública estadual. A pesquisa apontou que a absorção desses docentes, pela rede de ensino estadual, tende a acarretar consequências diversas: desvalorização dos profissionais da educação, dado o ingresso de trabalhadores ainda não qualificados; alteração na configuração da carreira, contribuindo para a fragmentação do quadro docentes, dadas as condições contratuais e salários diversificados; acirramento da concorrência desigual entre postulantes ao magistério; flexibilidade nas exigências de formação, com possível prejuízo ao alunado.

Palavras-chave: Políticas educacionais; Carreira docente; Contrato temporário; “Docente Acadêmico”.

Resumen: Este artículo forma parte de un proyecto de investigación que analiza el impacto de las directrices neoliberales en las políticas educativas. Este estudio se centra en los contratos de trabajo temporales dentro del sistema educativo del estado de Paraná, específicamente aquellos ofrecidos mediante Procesos de Selección Simplificados (PSS). Los autores identificaron un segmento previamente inexplorado: el grupo de "docentes académicos" conformado por estudiantes que aún no han completado una licenciatura en Educación. Se trata de un subgrupo significativo con características propias dentro del conjunto de docentes temporales contratados a través del PSS (Proceso de Selección Simplificado) para trabajar en Educación Primaria. La investigación se desarrolló en forma de estudio de caso, basado en el análisis de documentos, utilizando como fuentes los avisos de selección pública del PSS/PR desde 2008 hasta 2025, así como información relevante de la Secretaría de Educación del Estado disponible en el Portal de Transparencia del estado de Paraná. Se compararon las fuentes cronológicamente, identificando los períodos de mayor contratación dentro del subgrupo. Posteriormente, se elaboró un análisis centrado en el proceso de consolidación de esta subcategoría y sus posibles consecuencias para la educación ofrecida por el sistema de escuelas públicas provinciales. La investigación indicó que la absorción de estos docentes por el sistema educativo estatal tiende a tener varias consecuencias: devaluación de los profesionales de la educación, debido al ingreso de trabajadores que aún no están calificados; alteración de la estructura de carrera, lo que contribuye a la fragmentación del personal docente, dadas las diversas condiciones contractuales y salariales; mayor competencia desigual entre los solicitantes de puestos docentes; flexibilidad en los requisitos de formación, con posible perjuicio para los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Políticas educativas; Carrera docente; Contrato temporal; “Docente Académico”.

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Introduction

This study presents one of the components of a broader research project entitled “Policies for teaching career and remuneration: a dialogue between Brazil and Chile facing the advances and setbacks of neoliberalism”, involving six Brazilian universities and one Chilean university.

The aim was to examine the extent to which neoliberal strategies have reshaped teacher labor relations in public education systems. Regarding neoliberal intervention in educational policies, this study adopts the definition proposed by Gouveia and Leiva (2023):

In discussions about educational policies, it is understood here that the concept of neoliberalism encompasses markers of actions by nation or local governments which incorporate elements of results-oriented management to the detriment of the bureaucratic management focused on the means of the public policy offer. These elements subvert the commitment to building protection policies centered on the citizenship right, which are changed into policies of competition between institutions and, sometimes, between individuals under the false idea of merit as an individual path (p.4).

The excerpt above refers to the teaching staff of the Paraná state education system. It aims to raise questions about the composition and diverse types of temporary employment relationships in this education system, through the different hiring methods. The premise is that the flexibility of contracts, a neoliberal strategic mechanism, has led to a process of deprofessionalization of the state teaching career, especially because of the instability of the contractual relationship.

The main objective of this article is to examine the emergence and gradual consolidation of a subcategory of teachers, referred to as “undergraduate teachers,” outside the established teaching career structure in Paraná. This subcategory has been used to replace tenured/appointed teachers with temporary teachers, affecting the teaching profession due to the lowering of teacher qualification requirements and potentially compromising the quality of education.

Methodologically, this is a case study based on a review of the literature. The sources are public notices for Streamlined Selection Processes (PSS) from 2008 to 2025, as well as notices designated for the State Secretariat of Education, information found on the Transparency Portal of the state of Paraná. The information was first collected chronologically to identify the periods of growth in the aforementioned subcategory, followed by the analysis of the process of this new component of state policies in the

constitution of the teaching staff. The training and remuneration requirements established by the state for the hiring of temporary teachers were analyzed through a review of the public notices. The frequency and distribution of temporary teaching positions within the state school system were analyzed through the review of data obtained from the Transparency Portal of the state of Paraná.

Advances and setbacks of neoliberalism: the underlying strategy

Neoliberalism, as a school of economic and political thought and a technical-political program, although hegemonic, was not linearly implemented in Latin America (Suárez and Silva, 2024), alternating between periods of deepening (advances) and resistance (setbacks). From this perspective, the Brazilian State and its federative structure—which includes cities as federative entities—also presents diverse contexts regarding the influence and expansion of this agenda. In this study, the research focuses on the specific case of the state of Paraná, which implemented measures aligned with neoliberalism, with emphasis on educational policies which consolidate and deepen its guidelines.

The implementation of such measures occurs through specific, continuous, and gradual initiatives that progressively and subtly undermine existing legislation and rights—the underlying strategy. As a result, the phenomenon presents identifiable characteristics and becomes susceptible to more forceful denunciation only after a considerable period of time. Nevertheless, since its arrival in Brazil, the neoliberal agenda has encountered resistance, and many workers have spoken out against the removal of the rights of education professionals and their primary beneficiaries, the students.

The teaching career is central within the context of educational policies. As it guides and is guided by the organization of the educational system based on the educational structure, it entails specific demands regarding the size and type of teaching workforce required at each point in history (Gindin, 2011; Oliveira, 2021). The need for personnel policies based on the regularity of contracts, workplace autonomy against authority, and equality of working conditions are fundamental elements of dignity at work (Supiot, 2016).

However, the multiple and excessive functions assigned to teachers (Libâneo, 2002) beyond the specificities of teaching work can hinder the inclusion of this professionals in a single, defined, and legitimate labor category, undermining their careers in terms of its due recognition and rights, since the construction of professional identity is intrinsically linked to the unique historical context of the work practices analyzed.

Regarding the recognition of the relevance of the teaching profession to the quality of education, we highlight two criteria present in the Law No. 9394/1996, of Guidelines and Bases of National Education: article 62, which establishes the requirement of a full bachelor's degree for teaching in Brazilian Basic Education (Brazil, 1996); and article 67, which requires that entry into the education systems must occur “exclusively through civil-service examinations based on test scores and qualifications” (Brazil, 1996).

However, in a federative country like Brazil (Oliveira, 2021), subnational entities, although guided by national guidelines, have relative autonomy to structure and organize their education systems. One of the decision-making areas for these entities relates to the methods of recruiting the teaching workforce. Despite the constitutional requirement for civil-service examinations for permanent positions, the same Constitution has loopholes that allow for emergency temporary contracts. These loopholes addressed extremely specific cases, and always under exceptional or emergency conditions. The Constitution addressed potential abuse, limiting this into two aspects: the emergency created by the demand and the temporary nature of the contract.

The vast territorial extent of the country, regional disparities—including differences in economic development—and the contrasts between rural and urban contexts demanded the inclusion of teachers with incomplete and quite precarious training throughout the 20th century. This was particularly evident in rural schools, where it was often necessary to rely on minimally literate teachers. Likewise, many municipalities were compelled to hire professionals such as physicians, engineers, and lawyers to compensate for the shortage of qualified teachers, at a time when teaching programs remained scarce in many regions of the country.

This does not imply disregarding the possibility of a demand for teachers who have not yet completed their professional qualifications. However, even with the significant expansion of Basic Education, Paraná also had a substantial increase in the number of teacher education programs. While in 1960 the state had only ten higher education institutions—nine in Curitiba and one in Ponta Grossa—by 1969 that number had risen to 22. The establishment of the State Universities of Maringá and Londrina marked the beginning of the expansion of higher education outside the state's major urban centers (Sheen, 2000).

Today, Paraná has four federal universities (UFPR, UTFPR, UNILA, and UFFS), all with campuses in cities outside the state capital (Brazil, 2026); **seven** state universities (UNICENTRO, UEM, UEL, UNIOESTE, UENP, UNESPAR, and UEPG), all located outside Curitiba; as well as four private universities and dozens of private colleges with

campuses or branch locations throughout the state's regions (Paraná, 2026). Given this expanded structure for teaching degree programs, it is reasonable to expect that the hiring of non-qualified teachers would be limited to exceptional circumstances.

Thus, it is necessary to consider how this demand should be addressed, especially considering that neither the demand for new teachers nor temporary staffing needs have shown significant increases that could have caught state education administrators unprepared. This partially weakens the justification for the annual renewal of temporary teaching contracts. Under these circumstances, the repeated and widespread hiring of temporary teachers is best understood as a deliberate management policy.

The research findings support the hypothesis outlined above in the case of Paraná. Since 2000, despite the framework of constitutional and nonconstitutional law, the state education system has gradually replaced tenured teachers from the permanent teaching staff (QPM) with teachers hired through temporary contracts under the streamlined selection process (PSS), a recruiting process that authorizes temporary contracts of up to two years.

In this regard, Gouveia et al. (2023) analyzed the expansion of temporary teaching positions:

The role of civil-service examinations as a fundamental condition for the professional recognition of educators is a constitutional principle. Nevertheless, a vast body of literature highlights the continuity of temporary positions, particularly within state school systems. In the state school system of Paraná, data from the School Census have revealed not only the continuity, but a significant expansion of this modality. A decade ago, temporary teachers accounted for 37% of teaching positions in the state school system. In 2022, this group reached 47% of positions, mainly due to the decrease in the total number of tenured teachers in service (Graph 1). The last civil-service examination in the state education system took place in 2015, with more than 5,000 teachers joining the staff that year. The expansion of temporary contracts (PSS) starting in 2017 coincides with the decrease in the number of permanent staff; a civil-service examination is underway for 2023.

The disparity between tenured and temporary teachers is particularly striking. In 2024, for example, temporary teachers accounted for 52.8% of the total teaching workforce in Paraná (Klein, 2025). It is true that the state, in line with a broader national trend, faces a mismatch between the demand for and the supply of qualified teachers. Early in the decade, Bof, Caseiro, and Munding (2023) highlighted this discrepancy, stating that “analyses indicate that there are not enough licensed teachers to meet the immediate demand for qualified teachers in 2022 in most states and across several curricular areas” (p. 11). This shortage might appear to justify the state’s reliance on temporary teachers. However, the lack of civil-service examinations for potential permanent positions undermine this conclusion.

The Transparency Portal identifies temporary teachers by the following characteristics: the teaching position is for a fixed term, with the legal regime set as temporary, and the functional framework set as special regime (Paraná, 2025). These characteristics aim to align such contracts with the law in accordance with the increased demand for teaching staff, while obscuring the underlying reality of the abandonment of regular recruitment through permanent civil-service examinations. This mechanism circumvents the law, weakens the permanent teaching career structure, and compromises the stability of school organization due to the continuous turnover of teaching staff.

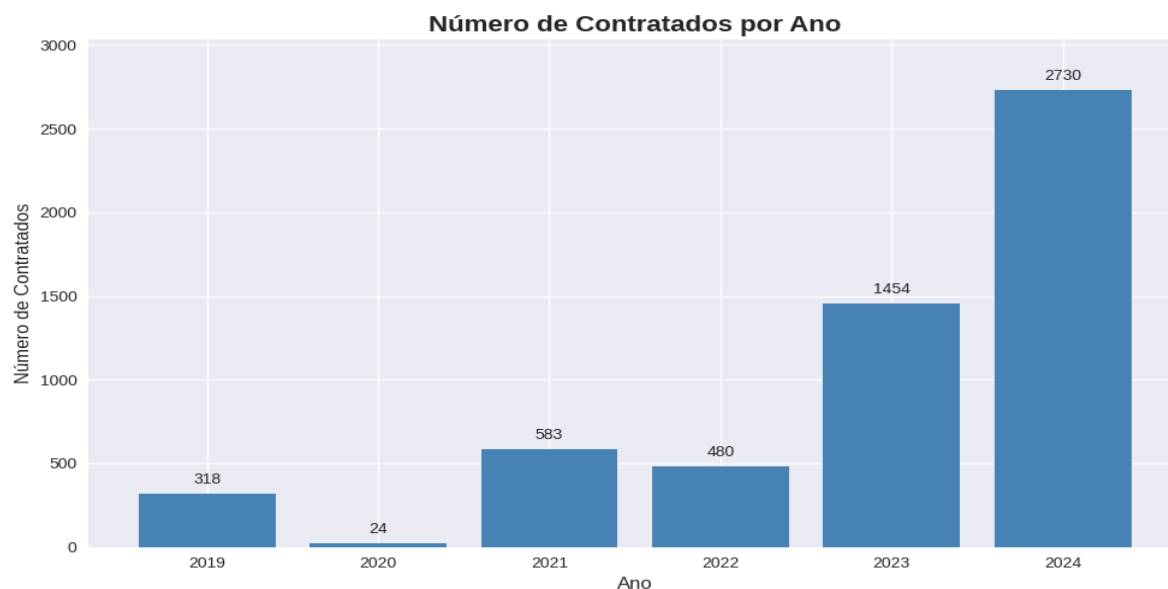
In addition, other issues associated with temporary hiring deserve attention and constitute the primary focus of this study, particularly the decline in teacher qualification requirements. Contrary to the provisions of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Brazil, 1996), the state has further relaxed the requirement for a teaching degree by allowing two categories of candidates to participate in the hiring process: graduates (holders of bachelor's, teaching, or technical degrees) who meet the qualifications established by law, and non-graduates, referred to as "undergraduate teachers", whose training remains incomplete.

This study focuses primarily on the latter category of temporary workers, for whom the state has lowered the educational requirements for teaching positions. As a result, the state public education system now comprises permanent teachers (QPM), temporary teachers (PSS), and temporary teachers classified as "undergraduate teachers" (PSS/Undergraduates). Given the limited attention devoted to this group, the present study focused on the latter subcategory.

Who, then, are these teachers? "Undergraduate teachers" are defined as "individuals who have not yet completed their undergraduate degree, do not hold a teaching license, and therefore begin teaching while still undergoing their initial professional training, lacking qualifications obtained through either from secondary-level teacher-training institutions or teacher-training programs" (Klein, 2025, p.45). Moreover, these teachers are hired through the PSS, the mechanism established by Complementary Law No. 108/2005 for the recruitment of temporary teachers.

The graph below illustrates the significant growth in the number of "undergraduate teachers" hired through the PSS within the Paraná state education system, particularly in recent years, underscoring the relevance of a specific study on its distinctive characteristics.

GRAPH 1: Number of undergraduate teachers hired per year:



(Source: Klein, 2025, p.57)

Embedded text:

Número de contratados por ano = Number of hired teachers per year

Número de contratados = Number of hired teachers

Ano = year

Public notices establish the minimum curricular workload that undergraduate students must have completed in a higher education program in order to be eligible for hiring as teachers through the PSS, and specify academic subjects and teaching methods. Since 2008, however, the proportion of workload has varied across public notices, ranging from 10% to 75% of the total curricular workload, with thresholds set at 10%, 25%, 50%, and 75%.

This is evident in Notice No. 76/2014, which established the following qualification requirements for participation in the PSS:

- a) A student enrolled in a specific degree program, with a Certificate of Enrollment and Attendance, followed by school record issued during the same semester of the call for submission of credentials, stating that the student has already completed 50% of the total course workload;
- b) A student enrolled in a specific degree program, with a Certificate of Enrollment and Attendance, followed by school record issued during the same semester of the call for submission of credentials, **stating that the student has already completed 10% of the total course workload** (PARANÁ, 2014, pp. 6–7; emphasis added).

In the documents analyzed, “undergraduate teachers” appear more frequently in urban centers (Curitiba, Londrina, Maringá, and Foz do Iguaçu) precisely because of the wide

availability of positions and greater demand for Portuguese and mathematics teachers, who would require full training. The high demand can only come from a continuous accumulation of vacancies, which in turn results from the failure to fill the required quota in time, either due to the departure of tenured teachers or the normal expansion of the school system. It cannot be implied, however, that these vacancies result from a lack of licensed teachers, since the urban centers mentioned have an optimal or at least reasonable number of undergraduate teaching degree programs, as well as a growing number of graduates who are continuously competing for teaching positions through the PSS, given the rare occurrence of civil-servant examinations for permanent teaching positions.

The subjects and teaching methods specified in the notices also vary. A candidate's registration to teach a specific subject will not be necessarily respected once they begin working. For example, an applicant who registers for teaching English may, if approved through the PSS, be assigned to teach Portuguese, History, or other subjects. In more extreme—though less frequent—cases, after hiring the teachers may be assigned to courses outside their field of expertise that bear no relation to the subject they originally intended to teach when applying through the PSS. The selected candidate may refuse to teach a particular subject, but at the risk of having their teaching hours reduced or eliminated. Faced with the risk of unemployment, candidates submit to the provisions from the State Department of Education (SEED).

Moreover, in the PSS modality, the teaching workload varies for both graduate and “undergraduate teachers”. The public notice determines this workload, but it is effective according to the needs of the system and is determined at the beginning of each school term, with the distribution of classes by the Regional Education Centers. This situation also creates uncertainty among teachers, since they never know for sure how many classes they will teach during the school year and, consequently, how much they will earn.

For example, notice 40/2025 establishes different workloads. A Teacher and Education Specialist Teacher may be assigned up to forty hours per week, whereas a Translator and Interpreter of Brazilian Sign Language (TILS) may work up to twenty-five or fifty hours per week (Paraná, 2025, p.280). Notably, in the case of TILS, the maximum workload may exceed Brazil's standard 44-hour work week, a topic for another discussion.

Although graduates and undergraduates formally compete on equal terms, the employer is under no obligation to provide a minimum number of courses or teaching hours. Consequently, the current system of class allocations triggers competition among teachers. In this context, “undergraduate teachers” are disproportionally disadvantaged, often being assigned the remaining classes after graduates have been allocated their assignments.

Regarding the responsibilities assigned to teachers, they are the same for tenured, temporary graduates, and “undergraduate teachers.”

For instance, the PSS Notice 40/2025, on pages 280 and 281, without distinguishing between permanent and temporary teachers, lists the requirements and responsibilities of Basic Education Teachers, including: planning and implementing pedagogical activities by developing and delivering lesson plans aligned with curriculum guidelines; revising and adapting activities based on observations and feedback from the teaching staff; participating in the development of the school’s Political-Pedagogical Project (PPP) and the Course Pedagogical Project (PPC); promoting inclusive and context-specific practices that address the specific needs of Indigenous students, quilombola students, and students attending itinerant schools, where applicable; adopting teaching strategies that respect individual learning styles and local realities while combating discrimination, prejudice, and social exclusion; monitoring student learning by analyzing educational outcomes in collaboration with the teaching staff and proposing interventions; fostering the development of general and subject-specific competencies in Basic Education, conducting diverse forms of assessments, implementing learning recovery strategies, organizing student records for class councils, and monitoring school attendance.

In addition, teachers are expected to maintain professional and institutional demeanor when teaching and fulfilling assigned workloads in accordance with current regulations; act critically and reflectively, encouraging student expression; comply with educational laws (the Federal Constitution, the National Education Law, the Child and Adolescent Statute, and state legislation); participate in planning, evaluation, and professional development activities; contribute to collaboration among the school, families, and the community; exercise authority and ethical responsibility in classroom management while fostering respectful interpersonal relationships and collective organization; ensure the effective implementation of pedagogical practices that promote the development of skills; and uphold an ethical and political commitment to serving all social groups and classes (Paraná, 2025).

Since the aforementioned public notice does not address any distinction between the types of teaching staff, we can imply that the same duties listed above also apply to “undergraduate teachers”.

The hiring possibilities available through the PSS are almost the same for graduate teachers and “undergraduate teachers,” as are the responsibilities assigned to them in teaching practice. The Transparency Portal reports that, for those already hired, the State does not differentiate between

temporary graduate teachers and “undergraduate teachers” performing the same duties. However, there is no such balance regarding remuneration, as “undergraduate teachers” are placed at the lowest wage level within the entire system.

Regarding remuneration differences, the wage tables available on the Transparency Portal, including those prepared by APP-Sindicato (the state Teachers Union), show different remuneration levels between the two groups. A brief comparison based on data from the most recent public notice shows an “undergraduate teacher” assigned a workload of 20 hours per week with a monthly salary of BRL 1,797.00, while permanent teacher with a full teaching degree and positioned at the first level of the career ladder earns BRL 2,460.28 per month. A comparison between a temporary graduate teacher and an “undergraduate teacher” reveals that while both earn the same salary rate of BRL 1,797.00, “undergraduate teachers” will earn a lower remuneration because they are allocated fewer classes distributed throughout the school year.

This remuneration scenario is one of the main points underscoring the subcategorization of the teaching profession in Paraná. Gouveia (2025), when analyzing Law No. 14.817/2024, which establishes guidelines for the professional development of public Basic Education professionals, highlighted the incorporation of the expression “adequate remuneration” as one of the attributes that constitute teacher appreciation:

The studies on teacher remuneration have supported this concept by examining the relationship between entry requirements, training, career progression, remuneration, and working conditions (Jacomoni, et al., 2016; Cordeiro and Gouveia, 2021). The access to permanent positions within the systems is a constitutive part of the idea of appreciation, even though the phenomenon of temporary work is a permanent tension and one of the persistent segmentations of the teaching staff (Oliveira, 2021) (Gouveia, 2023, p.1).

Indeed, the author argues that the increase of temporary hiring at the expense of recruitment through civil-service examinations based on academic qualifications places teachers in the formal labor market under conditions characterized by inequality and weakened labor protections (Gouveia, 2023, p. 3), with remuneration representing the most evident expression of this deterioration. In another entry, the author states that:

The persistent wage inequalities resulting from different types of contracts and the financial capacity of school systems coexist with different types of education, which end up being a factor in lowering the pay of early childhood education teachers and teachers on temporary contracts, conditions that, among others, operate outside the concept of adequate remuneration (Gouveia, 2025, p.6).

Given the persistent pay disparity, it can be argued that the state achieves cost savings by opting to hire temporary teachers and possibly by relying on “undergraduate teachers.”

Furthermore, the minimum wage for teachers in Paraná is among the lowest in Brazil. According to the 2025 State Salary Table, the base salary for tenured teachers working 40 hours per week was BRL **4,920.55**. In contrast, some Brazilian states offer salaries up to twice as high. The disparity is even more evident among teachers holding short-cycle teaching qualifications (BRL **3,815.42**) and “undergraduate teachers” (BRL **3,594.38**) (Paraná, 2025).

Cordeiro (2024) had already pointed out, in the context of Paraná, a situation in which “the scenario reveals an unequal division in labor relations within the teaching profession, split between permanent and temporary positions” (p. 3), thereby creating a pseudo-career structure.

The role of the “undergraduate teacher” represents one of the most drastic changes to the foundations of the teaching profession, with harmful consequences not only for teachers and prospective teachers but also, and equally concerning, for students, whose education is mediated by individuals who have not yet fulfilled the formal requirements for teaching. It is worth noting:

Among undergraduate teachers, a growing disparity has emerged regarding the rights arising from employment relationships, as this subcategory finds itself in a labor limbo, as they are neither one thing nor the other, which will be demonstrated below. From the perspective of teachers with full teaching degrees, the consequences are more profound and structural, as they directly affect the teaching profession. The inclusion in the education system of teachers who have not yet graduated to replace other tenured teachers who are on leave, retired, or in other temporary situations, under the guise of fulfilling the right to education, is a direct and indirect way of making teaching work more precarious in multiple dimensions (Klein, 2025, p.60).

Within the scope of this institutional architecture, Oliveira (2021, p.3) observed that there are factors (types of hiring, employment conditions, and differences in training) that promote a segmentation of the teaching profession, since they affect the very condition of “being a teacher”. The author highlights dimensions that lead to a state of professional discomfort:

The distinction between tenured and contract teachers is probably the most troubling of all the situations experienced by the teaching staff, because it creates informal hierarchies, since permanent staff feel a stronger sense of belonging to the school than contract employees and, as a result, feel more invested in the institution. It also contributes to disparities in terms of participation in school management and decisions regarding the students’ future. Contract employees generally have less authority (Oliveira, 2021, p.13/14, emphasis added).

In other words, the coexistence and concurrent educational practice between permanent, temporary, and temporary undergraduate staff fosters such segmentation and produces other effects on the teaching career. Among these effects, a hierarchical dimension can be observed (Oliveira), as contract-based teachers hold less authority. This configuration leads to a structural tension in the educational field, because

If a hierarchy of legitimacy already exists between permanent and temporary teachers, this leads us to question how the authority of undergraduate teachers in the state system would be established, since they are subtypes of temporary teachers (Klein, 2025, p.62).

The presence of “undergraduate teachers” in Paraná’s education system contributes significantly to the weakening of a professional structure. This results from another form of segmentation within the professional group, since a minimal level of equity is necessary for building a professional identity capable of sustaining collective rights.

Conversely, the possibility of a public contract—albeit temporary—that allows for the combination of teaching work with enrollment in a teaching degree program, seems to represent a significant attraction for undergraduate students. Beyond remuneration, the act of teaching itself provides learning experience and familiarity with the work environment, often functioning as a hopeful entry point into the teaching profession, contingent upon the availability of openings for permanent positions.

The continuation of this research requires the researchers to engage in dialogue with a representative group of “undergraduate teachers” to confirm the above inferences. It also aims to assess the impact of this group on the structure of the teaching career in Paraná and to examine the effect of its specific characteristics on the formation of a teaching identity. At this stage, however, the analysis is limited to defining the conditions that allow for the categorization of this group of teachers, who are invisible within the broader contingent of teachers.

Final considerations

As outlined in this study, the composition of the teaching staff in Paraná’s state education system has been undergoing gradual changes through the PSS, which, in addition to institutionalizing the replacement of tenured teachers with temporary graduate teachers, has also led to the inclusion, alongside the latter, of temporary “undergraduate teachers”.

This development reflects a broader neoliberal strategy to reduce public expenditure on social services, undermining the quality of public education by hiring a substantial number of teachers excluded from the career benefits afforded to tenured teachers. Furthermore, this strategy also involves cost reduction through the hiring of individuals still training and, therefore, lacking the formal qualifications required for full profession entry, in exchange for comparatively low remuneration.

In the case of “undergraduate teachers”, a conflict of rights arises: the right of teachers to work, even prior to the completion of a teaching degree, and the right of students to quality education, which presupposes instruction delivered by professionals who meet the minimum legally established qualifications.

As part of this strategy, the state also relies on legal provisions originally intended for specific, exceptional, and temporary situations, gradually transforming provisional mechanisms into permanent arrangements, thereby undermining their legal purpose.

At the same time, the teaching career has been constrained by conditions that discourage entry into the profession. At the state level, the use of the PSS promotes instability and insecurity through recurrent contract terminations. Graduate teachers compete with “undergraduate teachers” within the same selection process. Moreover, teacher remuneration in Paraná is among the lowest in the country, with a starting salary of BRL 3,903.32 for a 40-hour workload, while other states offer nearly double that amount; in this scenario, “undergraduate teachers” are at the lowest level.

The requirement, although not as a rule, of working in a subject different from the one desired, or even outside the teacher’s field of study, is certainly discouraging. The constant change of school units, resulting from the periodic “restart” imposed by the PSS policy, disrupts the teacher’s working conditions and demands readaptation to new environments, colleagues, and students, while imposing new commuting demands and reorganization of family routines. The dual role of “undergraduate teachers”, who simultaneously engage in higher education and school teaching, involves a double burden: academic training on the one hand and the preparation and delivery of educational activities on the other.

The succession of PSS notices demonstrates both the state’s disinterest in hiring graduate teachers and a growing reliance on hiring “undergraduate teachers”. For all these reasons, and for the purpose of future studies, it becomes relevant to define this category of teachers, whose presence in public education tends to increase and may possibly reconfigure the structure of the state teaching career.

The conflict between the interests of tenured teachers, graduate PSS teachers, and “undergraduate teachers” demands attention. Wage disparities and different rights and benefits fragment the workforce, weakening collective struggles against the state and its neoliberal policies.

Finally, there is a conflict of rights between “undergraduate teachers” and students, contrasting the right to employment with the right to quality education, which presupposes instruction provided by fully qualified teachers.

Further research will enable a more detailed examination of this configuration shaped by neoliberal policies, the state’s growing reliance on the “undergraduate teacher” subgroup, and the resulting implications for professional identity and the teaching-learning process.

At present, this study highlighted the state’s movement in expanding this subgroup and underscored the specific conditions that characterize its condition within the public education system.

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