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Professional Qualification and Public Labor Intermediation: Labor Market Management in Brazil, 1880-2017

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Abstract

This article analyzes the evolution, over the period from 1880 to 2017, of the two most important active employment policies in Brazil: public labor intermediation and professional qualification. By different means, these policies seek to regulate the encounter between labor supply and demand, encouraging individuals to participate in the economy and preventing job vacancies from going unfilled. The article discusses which arrangements between public and private actors were adopted in each period and what these arrangements reveal about the management of the Brazilian labor market. In order to historicize the formation of the labor market, unemployment is a relevant category, especially when we consider its institutionalization in the country through its inclusion in the state agenda and labor market regulation practices. Active policies migrated from the management of wage relations and the need to forge a new workforce, highlighting the role of the state (especially through authoritarian means) in the modernization of the productive sector until the 1980s, to the support for unemployed workers from the 1990s, given the processes of labor market flexibilization, rising unemployment rates, and the destabilization of occupational trajectories.

Keywords: State; labor market; professional qualification; Sine.

Introduction

In central capitalism, the formation of labor markets has been followed by several public initiatives aimed at optimizing the allocation of workers and inputs in production units. These initiatives have promoted agreements between the state and private agents, such as companies and unions, in the implementation of employment policies.

As the individualization of the sale of labor power became widespread in European countries, employment relationships began to be regulated by employment contracts and a disciplinary regime that dictated the pace of production. This led to a differentiation between private life and work, which now had a certain autonomy (Castel, 2013; Demazière, 1995). Employment emerged as the "social and legal inscription of individuals' participation in the production of wealth", while involuntary unemployment came to be "defined as its negative" (Gautié, 1998, p. 75). The development of unemployment as a public problem accompanied the collectivization of employment contracts, which intensified with the outbreak of workers' strikes and the economic depression of the 1890s (Reynaud, 2013). In the following years, nation states developed statistical techniques and data collection tools that gave materiality to the problem by identifying who and how many were unemployed (Alberti, 2011). The phenomenon made it possible to highlight a specific position in the labor market, distinct from that of "vagrants" and the unfit, whose participants required access to public goods and services. In the 20th century, employment policies spread in central capitalism, especially after the Second World War, aiming at socializing the unemployment risks and reducing the costs of hiring labor.

In Brazil, the phenomenon was different. Open unemployment was slow to become a public problem because it was made invisible by high rates of informality and inactivity. Employment policies were not directed to mitigate the effects of industrialization and urbanization on living conditions and sociability, as observed in central capitalism, but rather they represented "promises" of workers' inclusion in a modern Brazil. For much of the 20th century, employment policies were an attempt to adjust the workforce to the demands of urban occupations, allowing workers to be enrolled in a selective system of social protection. In this process, the relationship between the state and private agents changed, as did the identification of the problems of the Brazilian labor market, such as its lack of transparency, the poor conditions of labor absorption, and the public responsibility for workers who were excluded from wage-earning.

Complementing the historical analysis of unemployment insurance presented by Menezes (2024), this article focuses on active employment policies aimed at increasing the ratio between the employed population and the population able to work (Azeredo & Ramos, 1995). These policies are essential for managing the labor market, encouraging individuals to participate in the economy, and preventing vacancies from going unfilled. A good example of an active policy is the public employment service, which mediates the encounter between labor supply and demand. It is hoped that such service facilitates access to information and opportunities scattered throughout a territory, bringing workers and employers closer together, thereby reducing the costs of hiring labor (Autor, 2009; Cacciamali, 2005). In Brazil, the National Employment System (Sine) was created only in 1975, some 30 years after Convention 88 of the International Labor Organization (ILO), which advocated the importance of public employment services in reducing labor market distortions.

But the intermediation policy does not guarantee that workers will be in able to take jobs.

Educational requirements, expressed in terms of schooling and training level, are an obstacle to the inclusion of many workers in the production and distribution of goods and services. Put simply, qualifications reflect the general knowledge and specific skills available to workers. They serve to optimize communication skills and decision-making in production units, as well as enable the performance of complex tasks (Salm, 2009). The end of the 20th century was marked by the flexibilization of market economies and the weakening of qualifications within companies. The increase in educational requirements has been associated with changes in labor relations and in the technological bases of production units (Palier, 2010; Dedecca, 1998), making it possible to speak of qualifications as a "competition factor" in societies with increasing levels of structural unemployment (Letelier, 1999).

In the next sections, I analyze the formation of the Brazilian labor market based on the evolution of these two active policies. I focus on the ideas that have underpinned state intervention and the changes that have been observed in the public agenda. This article also discusses which arrangements between public and private actors were adopted in each period, and what these arrangements reveal about the management of the Brazilian labor market. Unemployment is a fundamental category for this endeavor, especially when we consider the institutionalization of unemployment (the inclusion of unemployment in the state agenda and the adoption of practices that regulate the labor market) through active policies, an experience that began in Brazil only in the second half of the 20th century. These policies migrated from the management of wage-earning and the need to forge a new workforce, highlighting the role of the state in the modernization of the productive sector in a peripheral capitalist country, to the support for unemployed workers in the face of the flexibilization of the labor market, rising unemployment rates, and greater instability in occupational trajectories.

The role of professional qualification in shaping the Brazilian labor market

In Brazil, the end of the enslavement of the black population was followed by an attempt to proletarianize the workforce through European immigration. The government reflected the racist theories of the late 19th century, which considered black and mixed-race workers unfit to participate in competitive capitalism (Schwarcz, 1996). This "surplus" workforce was relegated to inactivity and the informal subsistence economy (Kowarick, 1994), while the state assumed a residual role in managing the labor market. Although this theme is beyond this article scope, it must be acknowledged that slavery shaped labor relations in Brazil in terms of the intergenerational transmission of opportunities and the reproduction of racial inequalities through state action.

At the beginning of the free labor market, professional learning took place by the transmission of knowledge in production units, without any kind of external organization (Góes Filho, 1963). Public labor intermediation, on the other hand, was limited to attracting and settling European workers, leaving nationals to use private recruitment agencies in large urban centers. These agencies offered "reliable" labor to employers, given the diversification of the labor market and the expansion of the service sector (Lago, 2014; Souza, 2017).

Technical education was introduced in 1882, but the first national initiatives for professional training came with the advance of industry and wage relations in the republican context. At the

beginning of the 20th century, technical and vocational schools were created to prepare workers for factory jobs. In 1909, during the government of Nilo Peçanha, Decree-Law n. 7,566 created the Schools of Apprentice Artisans to "provide the children of the disadvantaged of fortune with the indispensable technical and intellectual preparation" in order to transform them into "useful citizens to the nation" and away from "ignorant idleness, the school of vice and crime" (Brazil, 1909). The underlying concern was not to ensure that these individuals participated in the labor market and in a system of rights, but rather to tackle behaviors perceived as deviant. This moralizing perspective characterized the first initiatives of workforce training, based on the division between propaedeutic education, offered to the elite, and vocational education, which included poor and low-schooled workers (Schwartzman & Castro, 2013). In this way, the "children of the disadvantaged" came to represent a potential and underutilized pool of labor.

With the industrial boom of the 1910s, the demand for labor in the secondary sector grew, which intensified the supply of vocational courses through the hiring of teachers and the expansion of educational institutions (Fonseca, 2010). Unlike in central capitalism, companies in Latin American countries did not play a decisive role in training the workforce, at least not in a proactive way and independently of state initiatives (Ducci, 2001). This vacuum was aggravated by the strengthening of national bureaucracies and the search for workers who were "fit" for modern work, which for much of the 20th century gave national states a central role in Latin American vocational training projects.

With the First World War and the decrease in the flow of immigrants, the scenario was ripe for the advancement of labor training on the public agenda through vocational courses of a welfare nature (Lima & Pacheco, 2017). In the wake of these changes, the 1930s marked the beginning of a developmentalist project in Brazil. It is illustrative that the first measure of Getúlio Vargas' government was the creation of the Ministry of Education and Public Health, responsible for managing vocational schools, a decision that was maintained until the 1970s. This change was followed by Decree n. 24,558, which addressed the shortage of qualified workers that was "painfully felt in factories and workshops" (Brazil, 1934). The Decree increased the budget for vocational education and imposed minimum operating standards on the newly created federal schools of industrial education. It also stipulated that workers qualified by the federal schools would be given preference in hiring by Union-dependent industrial enterprises. Shortly thereafter, the 1937 Constitution ushered in the *Estado Novo* and reaffirmed the importance of training the workforce to modernize the economy, arguing that vocational education was a "duty of the state" that was "directed toward the less privileged classes" (Brazil, 1937).

In the subsequent years, the trends that had begun in the early 20th century came to fruition. The challenge for vocational policies was to create a disciplined workforce ready to take on the available jobs. In a complementary way, the criminalization of vagrancy in the 1830 Imperial Penal Code and the 1941 Law of Criminal Contraventions separated the workforce from the idle, which was an important step in the institutional representation of the unemployed worker. However, the *Estado Novo* repositioned the vocational policy within the Brazilian welfare regime. The integration of the population into a new status of citizenship "was a project for the whole nation, but it was to be extended to nationals as each one qualified or fit into the ideal of people that the state wanted to promote" (Cardoso, 2019, p. 207). The work registry attested the belonging to a new group of individuals, and its possession depended on both the acquisition of specific knowledge and the

incorporation of a morality specific to wage workers. Qualification policies sought to fulfill these two conditions as a gateway for poor workers into a selective system of social protection.

The Estado Novo established vocational institutes and subsidized initiatives by subnational entities and professional associations. Industries and trade unions (the latter limited to legal unions) were required to set up apprenticeship schools to discipline and adapt the children from worker families to the demands of the productive sector. This arrangement is the root of the Brazilian tripartism, which is still heavily regulated by the state. In 1939, Decree-Law n. 1,238 aimed to "improve professional education" and decided that companies with more than 500 employees should provide qualification courses for their employees (Brazil, 1939). This decision was an attempt to make medium and large companies responsible for preparing the workforce, filling the vacuum that existed in the private sector.

The 1940s were marked by a new cycle of changes. In 1942, Decree-Law n. 4,048 created the National Service for Industrial Training, or *Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem dos Industriários* (SENAI), which was renamed the *Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial* a few years later. Its purpose was (and still is) to train factory workers through vocational schools coordinated by the National Confederation of Industry and financed by public funds (Brazil, 1942a). In that same year, Decree-Law n. 4,073 established the Organic Law of Industrial Education, which made the qualification of the workforce a form of secondary education, aiming at training "industrial and craft workers" and "transport, communications, and fishery workers" (Brazil, 1942b). The Decree presented the general guidelines for training courses, as well as their requirements and modalities, overcoming the fragmentation observed in the previous period. It was also established that the initial courses would be directed to individuals who had completed primary education and were between 12 and 17 years old, selected through entrance exams. This differentiated such model from the old Artisans' Schools, which were notably welfare-based. Also in 1942, Decree-Law n. 4,127 standardized the federal technical and industrial schools, as well as created federal schools in the states and the National Technical School in Brasilia (Brazil, 1942c). These regulations prioritized two groups: minors without jobs, who had to enroll in basic industrial courses, and workers who were already employed, to be enrolled in apprenticeship courses (Cunha, 2000).

With regard to workforce training, the democratic experience of 1945-1964 did not break with the Vargas policies. This became evident in 1946, when President Eurico Gaspar Dutra issued Decree-Law n. 8,621, which created the National Commercial Apprenticeship Service (SENAC). Under the management of the National Confederation of Commerce and with the same design as the industrial apprenticeship, SENAC was aimed at employees and minors (Brazil, 1946). The consolidation of the S System brought innovations to the workforce training that were adopted by several Latin American countries in the following decades (Ducci, 2001): independence between vocational and propaedeutic training, with the former geared toward the needs of the productive sector; financing through compulsory company contributions levied on payrolls; and participation by the government and private actors in decision-making processes, although this participation has been subject to different models of control and conflict regulation.

On this basis, the qualification policy remained practically unchanged until the 1950s. The only significant shift occurred in 1959, when Law n. 3,552, approved by the National Congress and sanctioned by President Juscelino Kubitschek, raised the minimum age for students in training courses from 12 to 14 years and granted "didactic, administrative, technical, and financial"

autonomy to industrial education institutions (Brazil, 1959). While this regulation decentralized decision-making processes, vocational training policies remained tied to long-term training in educational institutions.

In a country with a significant number of illiterates¹, the goal of training policies was to adapt the workforce to the requirements of urban occupations. It is from the perspective of shaping the labor market to provide "employable" labor in modern and urban sectors that we should understand the pioneering labor training initiatives.

Expansion of professional qualification and creation of a public employment service

Between 1930 and 1960, Brazil industrialized and diversified its urban services. As in other Latin American countries, the result was a gap between the needs of organized sectors of economy and the characteristics of the workforce, which placed vocational training at the center of the public agenda (ECLAC, 1970).

During the administration of President João Goulart, Decree n. 53,324 of 1963 created the Intensive Program for the Preparation of Industrial Manpower (PIPMOI), using resources from the National Primary Education Fund and the National Secondary Education Fund (Brazil, 1963). It is curious that the program was maintained after the military coup, which can be explained by the absorption and consolidation of the human capital theory in Brazil (Frigotto, 1995). Its postulates advocated the role of education in increasing productivity. This made PIPMOI indispensable to the development project, and it was up to the state to finance short courses through tax breaks, which allowed them to be run by technical schools, universities, trade unions, and units of the S System. The qualification policy was based on mass access and quick preparation of workers for registered jobs, a process that was implemented through a technocratic and productivist management (Medeiros, 2001).

PIPMOI was limited to workers in the industrial sector, particularly in the transport, mechanical, electrical, chemical, and construction industries. The aim was to meet the increased demand for qualified workers in the face of technological innovations and expansion of industrial establishments (Ramos & Stampa, 2016). In 1972, Decree n. 70,882 was issued by General Emílio Médici and included the service sector in the program's goals, changing its name to PIPMO (Brazil, 1972). Another change occurred during the government of General Ernesto Geisel, when Decree n. 75,081 of 1974 transferred the management of PIPMO from the Ministry of Education and Culture to the Ministry of Labor (Brazil, 1974b). This decision consolidated the qualification policy as an initiative of labor market regulation. In a scenario of low open unemployment, vocational training was seen as the country's main challenge, responsible for enabling low-schooled workers to find productive and better jobs (Jornal do Brasil, 1972). PIPMO became the main training initiative until the 1980s, qualifying some 2,6 million workers (Barradas, 1986).

Public labor intermediation has also changed considerably. Until the 1950s, it was limited to immigrant and northeastern workers, with the objective of providing jobs in the Center-South region (Paiva, 2004). On the other hand, private agencies had expanded in response to the strengthening of meritocratic criteria in filling job vacancies, combined with the courses offered to

young people with high school diplomas (Lima, 2022). However, private intermediation soon received criticism. The bureaucratic expansion of the state and the limitation of these agencies to a small clientele able to pay for the service were relevant phenomena. Not surprisingly, in 1956 Brazil ratified Part II of ILO Convention 96, which proposed a ban on private employment agencies.

Public labor market regulation continued to gain momentum in the following decade. Shortly after the military coup, an interministerial commission was formed and began to advocate for the improvement of official unemployment statistics and the strengthening of active policies through public employment agencies and vocational training programs (Correio Braziliense, 1965). Also in 1964, due to Law n. 4,589, the Regional Labor Offices (DRTs) began to supervise private employment agencies and to facilitate the encounter between workers and employers (Brazil, 1964). In 1965, Law n. 4,923 created the General Register of Employed and Unemployed Persons (CAGED), allowing the state to monitor the balance between hiring and firing in the formal sector of the economy (Brazil, 1965). In the subsequent year, Decree n. 58,550 inaugurated the National Department of Manpower (DNMO), whose Vocational Placement and Training Division centralized information on labor demand and fixed operating rules for private agencies (Brazil, 1966). Next, Decree n. 62,756 of 1968 placed private agencies under the DNMO and made their operations accountable to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, conditioning the access to a public license (Brazil, 1968). In that same year, the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) was created to collect and disseminate periodic information on the labor market.

In an authoritarian context, these decisions represented the effort to expand the reach of institutions, to build an information system and to expand bureaucratic activities. Thus, professional intermediation targeted urban workers who did not return to the market after being laid off, making such period decisive for the "social construction of the job seeker" on the public agenda (Guimarães, 2009a, p. 167). The 1960s marked the introduction of this character in initiatives of labor market regulation, albeit in an incipient way, as illustrated by the brief experience of unemployment insurance in 1965, which was replaced by the creation of the Severance Compensation Fund (FGTS) in 1966.

Some economic changes took place at the end of the 1960s. In 1968, after a period characterized by inflation control, economic policy began to be based on monetary expansion and incentives to produce consumer durables and capital goods (Hermann, 2005). Two important results were the increase in the employment level and the use of idle capacity in industry, structuring the so-called Brazilian "economic miracle" (Tavares & Belluzzo, 1979). However, living conditions were unequal within the territory. For example, during the 1960s, around one-third of the rural population migrated to large cities, a significant proportion of them moving in the northeast-southeast direction to find work and escape periodic droughts (Camarano & Abramovay, 1999).

Then, the government of General Emílio Médici implemented the First National Development Plan (PND), which covered the period from 1971 to 1974. Among other objectives, the PND envisaged the incorporation of a workforce surplus through industrial investment and the relocation of northeastern workers to the north of the country (Brasil, 1971). As stated in the document, the "economic occupation" of the Amazon would prevent these workers from migrating to urban centers of the Center-South, configuring the first national initiative with unified rules that sought to mediate the filling of job vacancies. But the profiles and expectations of both workers and employers were not yet important issues, and the state was only responsible for regulating regional

displacement to avoid a demographic explosion in cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Next, in 1972, Brazil ceased being a signatory of Part II of Convention 96 and began to ratify only Part III, aimed at regulating private employment agencies². This led the government to abandon the dispute with private companies, building a system capable of coordinating employment agencies that addressed people fresh out of school³.

After high growth rates, the national economy began to slow down in 1974 because of the first oil crisis and the exhaustion of the model implemented in the "economic miracle". The response of General Ernesto Geisel's government was the publication of the Second PND, whose goal was to protect and expand the industrial sector through the creation of regional centers (Brazil, 1974a). The Plan also addressed the so-called "employment problem", presenting the idea of expanding the economic active population at a rate higher than demographic growth, which would reduce the workforce underutilization. In this sense, the Second PND proposed the creation of a National Employment System (Sine) to improve the "functioning of the labor market, through a network of placement agencies to provide free services to the less qualified population in search of employment" (Brazil, 1974a, pp. 71-72). In 1975, Decree n. 76,403 made this intention a reality, under the coordination of the Ministry of Labor and using resources from the Fund for Supporting the Unemployed (FAD) (Brazil, 1975). The goal was to strengthen the public management of the labor market by collecting information and optimizing the filling of job vacancies. The idea of unemployment as resulting from its frictional manifestation prevailed (Moretto, 2007), without any concern for cyclical unemployment masked by underemployment. After the economic growth of the 1960s and the 1970s, it was up to the state to promote the meeting between workers and employers, as well as investing in economic activities that made intensive use of labor.

The Sine formula was already well known in central capitalism, at least since the early 20th century. Employment services would recognize individual interests and expectations, and in addition, they should provide diagnoses on the labor market and match workers to jobs through training programs. Such a service could reduce the time and resources needed to fill job vacancies, thus avoiding income losses for workers and productivity losses for firms (Autor, 2009; Cacciamali, 2005). After the Second World War, Mexico and Argentina inaugurated public intermediation in Latin America, while in the 1970s, Brazil, Peru, and Nicaragua adopted employment services as a complement to the import substitution project (Mazza, 2013).

However, contrary to international experience, Sine was not combined with the offering of unemployment insurance, and for more than a decade, professional intermediation took place without any kind of financial support (Chahad, 1993). This illustrates the attempt to organize the productive sector without increasing the reservation wage (and consequently the bargaining power) of workers. Sine did not overcome the low institutionalization of unemployment in Brazil, which forced active individuals to sell their labor power at any price. Moreover, public intermediation limited the so-called "Brazilian workers community" to formal wage earners. In central capitalism, this perspective composed the development of employment systems and followed the structuring of labor markets under the Fordist model, a project whose limits only became apparent in the 1980s (Spasova et al., 2017). In Brazil, informality has always been a relevant problem for socioeconomic studies (Cunha, 1979), which has given Sine notable limits since its creation.

Active policies and the constitution of unemployment as a public problem

In its early years, Sine benefited from partnerships between institutions and local governments, as well as contributions from both the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) for staff training (Borges, 2003). However, Sine did not have a stable source of funding that tied its performance to the availability of regular federal resources. The fiscal crisis and the decline in revenues in the 1980s had the immediate effect of underfunding the system, and thus, Sine was affected by "the dismantling of technical teams and the loss of much of the acquired knowledge and experience" (Cardoso Júnior et al., 2006, p. 10).

During the 1980-83 crisis, the exhaustion of the developmentalist model cemented these changes and weakened labor market regulation. PIPMO was closed in 1982, while the First PND of the New Republic excluded Sine from the government's priority actions (Brazil, 1986b). In 1986, the creation of unemployment insurance promoted a parallel structure to manage the benefit, based on the DRTs and the Caixa agencies (Brazil, 1986a). The low level of unemployment institutionalization and the political transition explain a curious phenomenon: if Sine was conceived without any kind of financial assistance to the unemployed, in the subsequent decade the distribution of benefits was not followed by the offer of an employment service.

At the end of the 1980s, unemployment insurance faced obstacles in terms of its regulations and funding rules. To solve this problem, the 1988 Constitution linked the insurance to PIS/PASEP contributions, while Law n. 7,998 of 1990 made the requirements for accessing the benefit more flexible and unified employment policies, coordinated by a deliberative council (Codefat) and financed by the Workers' Support Fund (FAT) (Brazil, 1990). It was around the Unemployment Insurance Program that other employment policies began to structure their actions, in a scenario marked by the strengthening of the social agenda in the post-democratization period.

In 1993, Council Resolution 45 associated the System financing with the performance of its units, applying minimum and maximum values of resources in order to avoid major regional disparities. In addition, Sine became responsible for supporting "workers applying for unemployment insurance in their search for a new job". These regulations were accompanied by a multiplication of service stations, the number of which increased from 350 to 1,138 between 1990 and 1994. In the wake of the changes brought about by the productive restructuring, such as outsourcing and greater occupational instability, private agencies also expanded, consolidating an intermediation market (Guimarães, 2009b)⁵.

Unemployment insurance served as the basis for the resumption of work training, and as a result, beneficiaries had to be incorporated into the labor market by participating in qualification courses offered by Sine (Brazil, 1990). The idea was that the unemployed needed to undergo "professional retraining" to become competitive, a term that was replaced in 1994 by "integrated orientation, outplacement, and professional qualification actions". The combination between unemployment insurance and intermediation policy was reproduced in other initiatives. This was the case with the Professional Retraining Program, created in 1994 by the federal government to provide qualification through public employment agencies. The three-month courses taught basic skills (oral and written communication, mathematics, and general knowledge) and specific skills

(professional practices, technological tools, and safety standards) to unemployed workers (Vieira & Alves, 1995). This strengthened the training of workers through formal education, rather than training within companies themselves.

It is worth highlighting some phenomena at the macro level. The 1990s were characterized by technological changes and new labor management strategies, with the reorganization of firms and the decreasing in production costs. In the context of commercial opening, it was hoped that upgrading the workforce skills would increase productivity and make Brazilian companies more competitive (Fogaça, 1998). On the other hand, the rise in unemployment rates was interpreted as a consequence of the inadequacy of the workforce for the global economy (Toledo & Rummert, 2009).

There was also a shift in the state agenda. Until then, the so-called "employment problem" had been based on a collectivist logic, which argued the inadequacy of workers to the modern sectors of the economy during the industrialization and the expansion of urban services. The challenge was to overcome the incomplete commodification of the workforce, with less qualified workers remaining in inactivity and in informal occupations. Both the public employment service and the professional qualification policy aimed to integrate the potential workforce into an increasingly regulated labor market, and the bureaucracy was tasked with reducing the costs of hiring workers. From the 1990s, after a period of transition in the 1980s, active policies sought to solve the inadequacy of the Brazilian labor market and create a flexible production model. The target was not a structuring market that required an authoritarian integration based on wage relations and the factory model (a project whose limits were visible, as the PIPMO figures revealed), but a market that was experiencing deregulation and becoming increasingly unstable and competitive. Combining the reduction of economic inactivity with the offer of new benefits, the job search started to compose workers' daily lives. Intersectoral mobility and recurrent unemployment increased, while laid-off workers rarely remained in their origin sector (Cardoso, Comin & Guimarães, 2006). The result was an increase in the number of unemployed with few economic prospects, which encouraged interventions aimed more at the workers' status (unemployed and vulnerable) than at occupational groups.

From a model directed to managing wage relations and integrating individuals into the "legal" labor market, active policies began to focus on the low-income unemployed. These workers had to be given additional training, since their schooling was insufficient, and their previous work experience (if any) did not guarantee success in recruitment processes. This period was characterized by the adoption of an individualistic logic, in order to prepare workers for a competition that would necessarily end with winners and losers in the processes of economic flexibilization and internationalization.

Not surprisingly, training programs emphasized the problem of labor supply, while the problem of demand (in this case, the conditions of the productive units and the number of jobs created) took a back seat in government discourse. The notion of "competence" started to guide public initiatives and translated a new training model based on continuous learning, general qualifications, and interpersonal skills (Dubar, 1998). The training of workers should be broad, diverse, and applicable to different jobs and occupational groups, as an attempt to reduce the costs associated with relocating workers, given the increase in turnover rates and the weakening of occupational identities (OECD, 1996).

In this scenario, the Ministry of Labor under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso created the National Plan for the Qualification of Workers (Planfor). The Plan covered the period from 1996 to 2002 and aimed at reducing both unemployment and underemployment through vocational training, focusing on vulnerable workers, such as those in high-turnover jobs. Funded by FAT, Planfor was linked to other employment policies, particularly unemployment insurance, and defined its beneficiaries as a priority group for the access to training courses. According to the tripartism that defined employment policies, these courses were offered through agreements with various entities, such as technical schools, universities, trade unions, S System, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and business entities (Cardoso, Façanha & Marinho, 2002)⁶. In addition to the skills mentioned in the Professional Retraining Program, Planfor included management skills to increase the productivity of the self-employed, as well as workers from small and medium companies. In 1996, Codefat Resolution 126 articulated Planfor's actions around the State Qualification Plans (PEQ) and the National and Regional Partnerships (PARC), with the goal of training at least 20% of the workforce every year. In 1997, Decree n. 2,208 regulated professional education at the basic, technical, and technological levels⁷. The main objective was to promote a transition between school and the labor market, as well as to specialize and update the national workforce, in a clear separation between propaedeutic education and workforce training (Brazil, 1997).

Reproducing this division, Planfor innovated by adopting the notion of "employability". This refers to the workers' characteristics that allow them to be employed in a context of technological innovations and destructuring of labor markets (Lavinias, 2001). The concern for employability followed the increase in schooling of the Brazilian population in the 20th century (Brito, 2017), assigning new challenges to workforce training beyond literacy and school inclusion. However, by emphasizing the "competitive advantages" of workers, the notion of employability translated a direct link between professional qualification and better chances in the labor market, without taking into account market conditions and variations in aggregate demand (Machado, 1998).

Other characteristics summarize the qualification policy all over this period. We can highlight the decentralized management and the offering of free short courses (Bulhões, 2004). Also noteworthy is the prominence of the Ministry of Labor, to the detriment of the Ministry of Education, a change introduced by PIPMO. The target was to quickly adapt workers to the demands of productive units, rather than to promote educational training. But Planfor trained between 2% and 5% of the workforce each year (around 17.2 million workers), a figure far below its initial goal (Rocha, 2011). Only half of the workers enrolled in the courses were unemployed or in the process of being laid off (Manfredi, 2002). This problem was raised in an audit by the Federal Court of Auditors (TCU), which also criticized the excessive concern for the number of courses without using measures of effectiveness such as those based on the hiring chances of the students (Salomon, 2000).

Despite its limitations, the 1990s saw the development of a cohesive platform for tackling unemployment. This experience continued into the 2000s, with the expansion of wage relations and the strengthening of the social agenda.

Active policies since the 2000s

The supply of registered jobs increased from 2002, while the unemployment rate showed a downward trend. These phenomena followed the destructuring of the labor market observed in the previous decade, as well as a period of economic recession between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s (Oliveira & Turolla, 2003; Baltar, 2015). The result was the consolidation of unemployment insurance as a policy to regulate the labor market, given the advance of wage relations and, consequently, the increase in the population eligible for the benefit.

In 2000, Codefat Resolution 257 included trade unions in the provision of professional intermediation services. This decision operationalized Resolution 197 of 1998, which had established that private non-profit organizations representing workers and employers could sign agreements in metropolitan regions. This was followed by greater coordination between employment policies. On December 28, 2000, the Official Federal Gazette established that Sine should act to "support the payment of Unemployment Insurance benefits", aiming at "providing insured workers with the services they need to return to the job market". Thus, Sine replaced the parallel structure created in 1986 to manage the insurance. Such a system soon overtook the DRTs and Caixa branches in the screening of policyholders (Borges, 2003), and the number of its service stations grew by 4.9% per year between 2000 and 2009⁸.

Sine continued to be based on agreements between the federal government and the states, with the former responsible for setting up employment agencies and the latter for providing the services⁹. There was some concern about the stability of the system, since its existence depended on the signing of temporary agreements. In the 2000s, Codefat extended the validity of these agreements several times at the request of subnational entities. In April 2008, Resolution 570 authorized the Secretariat for Public Employment Policies (SPPE) of the Ministry of Labor to automatically revalidate the agreements, depending only on the submission of partial reports by the executing entities.

Professional qualification policy underwent even more profound changes. When Planfor expired and President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva was elected in 2003, Codefat Resolution 333 created the National Qualification Plan (PNQ). Funded by FAT, the PNQ sought to reduce "the levels of unemployment and underemployment" in Brazil. This would be done by increasing "the likelihood of obtaining employment and decent work and of participating in processes to generate work and income opportunities" (Codefat, 2003, p. 2). The PNQ was based on agreements between the Ministry of Labor and public and private institutions, and its courses covered elementary occupations, particularly in the service and construction sectors (Lima, 2018).

The PNQ actions were divided into Territorial Qualification Plans (PlanTeQs, aimed at training the workforce considering the needs of each territory), Special Qualification Projects (ProEsQs, of an experimental nature and targeting the development and validation of qualification methodologies), and Sectoral Qualification Projects (ProSeQs, based on the needs of professional categories). Policyholders of social assistance policies were a priority group, along with workers registered in Sine and beneficiaries of unemployment insurance. We can say that this period consolidated a change that began with the democratic opening. From being a passport to wage employment and, consequently, to a restrictive system of social protection, professional qualification started to complement the cash transfer policy aimed at the working poor. The PNQ

also made it more common for Sine users to be referred to courses in the S System and NGOs (Lessa, 2011).

Nevertheless, the qualification policy lost ground in the government program. In the 1990s, workforce training had been based on increasing employability in a scenario marked by job cuts. The PNQ updated the concern to increase workers' competitiveness, but the decline in unemployment rates distanced the agenda set in the 1990s from the economic situation of the 2000s. The result was a discursive shift by the Lula government. Its initial goal was to tackle low qualification and high unemployment as problems inherited from the previous government. In his second term, the qualification policy began to focus on specific groups of workers, such as the long-term unemployed, who remained excluded from job opportunities during the economic boom¹⁰. The formal sector (especially in commerce, services, and civil construction) absorbed a large share of the low-schooled workers, which contributed to the fact that the qualification policy lost the urgency it had at the turn of the century.

The labor market formalization was followed by high turnover rates, and as the number of beneficiaries increased, the FAT resources were directed to unemployment insurance. By contrast, the PNQ had almost three times fewer resources in 2006 than in 2002, a loss that was not offset by the 37.1% increase in investments by the end of the decade¹¹. Not surprisingly, the PNQ qualified only 1.2 million workers between 2003 and 2009, half the performance of Planfor in a single year (Rocha, 2011). On the other hand, Rocha (2011) points out that the qualification courses became longer, with an average duration of 198.86 hours in 2009, much higher than the 62.4 hours/course reached by Planfor in 2002. In other words, the qualification policy became more focused and intensive during the expansion of job vacancies.

Two limitations remained from one plan to the next. The first was the production of generic reports on the quality of the courses, which only touched on bureaucratic matters and did not consider the impact of the training on hiring chances (Alaniz & Bruno, 2018). The second was the difficulty of including vulnerable workers. Although most of the workers enrolled in the PNQ were unemployed or self-employed, which was an improvement over Planfor, they were usually better schooled than the average unemployed population (Lessa, 2011). Therefore, they already enjoyed better conditions for professional integration than workers in the lower educational strata.

In the 2000s, Sine underwent some changes, and the professional qualification policy was reformulated, while maintaining the principles that had guided it since the 1990s. The main change took place "outside" the policies, through the labor market structuring, with a reduction in both unemployment and informality rates. While policies aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the workforce are limited and fragmented (Frigotto & Ciavatta, 2003), it must be acknowledged that the expansion of the labor market in the 2000s gave these policies greater effectiveness, increasing the capillarity of public regulation and dampening conflicts over unemployment.

In the 2010s, the reliance of Sine on temporary agreements became an issue (Lobo & Anze, 2014). With the end of a cycle of multiannual agreements, many providers left the system, leading to a decline in the number of service stations of around 17.8% between 2009 and 2010. The recovery of public intermediation was made impossible by the imbalance in the FAT accounts, which went into deficit in 2015 and 2016, and again from 2018. This imbalance was caused by the decline in PIS/PASEP collections due to the economic crisis and tax breaks that benefited the business sector.

On the other hand, the spending on vocational training was more than halved between 2009 and 2011. Soon after, the idea that Brazil was suffering from a low supply of qualified labor gained momentum. This was the diagnosis of the Ministry of Education in a letter sent to the Presidency of the Republic in 2011, during the term of President Dilma Rousseff. The letter proposed the implementation of the National Program for Access to Technical Education and Employment (Pronatec), a new qualification policy that would allow for the "social inclusion" of low-schooled workers and solve "one of the greatest challenges facing the country's continued economic growth, which is the lack of qualified labor"¹².

In that same year, Law n. 12,513 created Pronatec, which became part of the productive inclusion axis of the Brazil Without Poverty Program. The objective was to provide medium-level vocational training and professional qualification courses, with a minimum workload of 160 hours (Brasil, 2011). In addition to the extension of the public education system through the expansion and internalization of Federal Institutes, Pronatec offered professional training scholarships, just like the Technical Education Program (Protec) in the state of São Paulo (Lima, 2012). These scholarships were available to both public sector employees and students, and covered tuition, food, and transportation costs.

Funds were transferred from the federal government to public and private institutions, particularly the S System and Federal Institutes. Although the model of agreements was maintained, the program management was transferred from the Ministry of Labor to the Ministry of Education and, consequently, FAT stopped financing vocational training. In its place, Pronatec relied on resources from the National Education Development Fund (FNDE), as did Codefat. Such council was replaced by the Deliberative Council for Vocational Training and Qualification, composed by representatives of the federal government. This decision interrupted tripartism in the management of professional qualification, which was only resumed at the end of President Dilma Rousseff's first term. At the time, a committee was created to coordinate the program, including trade unions and the National Committee for Professional and Technological Education Policies (CONPEP) (Castioni, 2020).

Pronatec also reflected a new moment in government discourse. Contrary to what had characterized qualification policy since the 1990s, the aim was not to prevent workforce underutilization and long-term unemployment. After the fall in open unemployment rates, in a scenario perceived as close to full employment, the debate about filling job vacancies was strengthened in order to prevent the economic slowdown that could occur in the subsequent years¹³. Pronatec was a response to pressure from the business sector, which complained about the lack of qualified workers and the resulting wage costs. The notion that Brazil was experiencing a "blackout" of skilled labor was widespread (Burnier & Gonçalves, 2012; Amorim, 2012). This idea was criticized for its alarmist and generalizing tone, and sometimes for being disconnected from the trajectory of the Brazilian labor market (Menezes Filho, 2010; Nascimento, 2011).

In any case, the qualification policy acquired a cohesive representation, overcoming a certain cooling in state formulation in the 2000s. The unemployed (as a social group that may or may not have access to unemployment insurance) were no longer a priority group for workforce training, although the intention to combine different employment policies was clear. The interface with Sine persisted in the operationalization of Pronatec, while unemployment insurance was subjected to

another eligibility criterion, when it was decided that the Union could link its access to the participation in vocational courses (Brazil, 2011).

This shift led Pronatec to overcome the residual nature of the PNQ, qualifying 8.1 million workers and students between 2011 and 2014, 2.3 million through technical courses and 5.8 million through short courses. Among the latter, 22.4% were individuals enrolled in the Unified Registry for Social Programs (Jannuzzi, 2016). The strategy was the same as in previous initiatives, grounded on short and free courses. The five courses with most vacancies in 2016 were technical training in informatics, agriculture, administration, construction, and electronics, reaching workers with different profiles (DIEESE, 2017).

Some problems deserve attention, such as the high dropout rates and the idleness of vacancies due to the difficulty of attracting students and offering courses tailored to their interests (Cassiolato & Garcia, 2014). Another gap was the measurement of the effects of Pronatec on hiring chances. A study conducted by the Ministry of Finance, based on data on labor market mobility from 2011 to 2013, found that participation in Pronatec courses did not improved entry into the formal labor market (Tokarnia, 2015). However, other studies disagree with this conclusion. Sousa, Silva, and Jannuzzi (2015, p. 175) examined the period from 2011 to 2014 and suggested that the participation in Pronatec increased the chances of a worker to have access to formal jobs and to become a registered micro-entrepreneur. Lucena and Fonseca (2016) had a similar goal and found higher rates of formalization among Pronatec graduates. Despite the results, these studies were carried out at the end of the program and did not affect the provision of courses and the design of the qualification policy.

Until the mid-2010s, the schooling of the Brazilian population was boosted through the decentralization of education management, the adoption of education spending floors, the implementation of social assistance policies, the creation of continuous progression programs, and the redistribution of resources among municipalities (Menezes-Filho, 2015). Microdata from the PNAD show that in 1992, only 21.7% of the workforce aged 18 and over had a high school diploma. This rate increased to 36% in 2002 and, more significantly, to 53.2% in 2015. On the other hand, the share of the workforce with a university degree jumped from 3.3% to 14.8% during the period, due to the expansion of public universities and the democratization of admissions through the Quota Law, as well as the subsidization of tuition at private universities (Mancebo, Vale & Martins, 2015). However, the average schooling level remained low by international standards (OECD, 2016), even lower than in other Mercosur member countries (Matoso, 2017). Many people had no schooling at all, an indicator that went from 36.2% to 30.8% of the adult workforce between 1992 and 2015. This group highlights the difficulty of extending schooling to older cohorts¹⁴ that bear the marks of school dropouts and restrictive educational projects. Thus, when detached from the school system, the qualification policy is quite limited, given its low capillarity and the educational disparities in Brazil.

In addition to these structural problems, employment policies were affected by the severe economic recession that took place between the second quarter of 2014 and the last quarter of 2016. Spending on Sine fell by 71.1% (40.1 million reais) between 2014 and 2018¹⁵, while investment in Pronatec was around 1.5 times lower in 2015 than in 2014¹⁶. The program was finally emptied in 2016, after the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff. An audit conducted by the Comptroller General of the Union (CGU) found that only 10% of the workers who benefited from the federal government's training programs between 2004 and 2017 were able to enter the labor market

immediately after completing their courses (Tomazelli, 2017). This served as a warning for future initiatives, which should use more robust tools to control spending and evaluate their results.

In a scenario characterized by an increase in the unemployed population and a decrease in tax revenues, the economic crisis and the political rupture ended this last cycle of active policies. In 2017, Codefat Resolution 783 restructured the PNQ and renamed it the Brazilian Social and Professional Qualification Program (Qualifica Brasil). Preliminary results, based on requests made through the Access to Information Law, show that Qualifica Brasil was a virtual platform that offered one-off courses, which only 233,356 workers completed by 2019. Also in 2017, the Management Report of the Secretariat for Public Employment Policy (SPPE) stated that the agreement instrument was "not suitable for implementing public policies of a continuous nature, such as Sine". In 2018, Law n. 13,667 was passed by the National Congress and approved by President Michel Temer. The financing of Sine began to occur through "fund-to-fund transfers", which directed the FAT resources to local funds created by states and municipalities (Brazil, 2018).

Conclusions

In Brazil, the history of intermediation and professional qualification policies can be divided into six stages. At the end of the 19th century, the first stage took on a residual tone. The workforce was considered incapable of adapting to the free market, which relieved the state of responsibility for preparing workers, as well as restricted public intermediation to attracting European immigrants. The second stage started with the spread of technical education in the early 20th century, as industry advanced and European immigration declined. The children from worker families were the target of moralizing initiatives aimed at "disciplining" and preparing the workforce for urban occupations.

The third stage consolidated this model, composing a development project based on import substitution. Between the 1930s and the 1950s, it was assumed that the national workforce lacked the necessary characteristics for industrial work. The qualification policy was supposed to shape, through professional training and behavioral regulation, the inactive workforce or those who remained in traditional labor relations. The professional courses were offered to young people without jobs and to employed workers, serving as a gateway to wage relations and, consequently, to a limited system of social protection. In the fourth stage, between the 1960s and 1970s, the qualification policy was based on massive training programs, through quick and free courses, directed to workers in secondary and tertiary sectors. Another novelty was the creation of an information system on the formal labor market, anchored in the labor intermediation in Sine and the regulation of private agencies. The "job seeker" appeared for the first time in the design of active policies, albeit in an incipient way and disconnected from the offer of unemployment insurance benefits.

After a transitional period in the 1980s, the 1990-2016 period comprises the fifth stage. Several qualification programs were interrupted from one presidential term to the next, but even so, this stage has a certain continuity. Unemployment was consolidated on the public agenda, especially after the creation of FAT and the Unemployment Insurance Program in 1990. The qualification policy focused on increasing the competitiveness of workers in a flexible market with high turnover rates and unstable professional identities. Sine's actions were expanded and

combined with other employment policies to reduce the costs of hiring workers during the growth of intersectoral mobility. On the other hand, private intermediation expanded and consolidated a clientele among workers with better socioeconomic conditions, who were increasingly engaged in remote search via apps (Cacciamali, Ligiéro & Matos, 2008; Moretto, 2018). Under tripartism, the training of workers through short courses financed by public funds and taught by private and public entities also prevailed.

The employability paradigm came to structure active policies. The underlying concern shifted from the general characteristics of the workforce, as an attempt to assimilate the inactive population and the "traditional" workers, to investing in each worker's portfolio. The goal was to prepare workers who were already well integrated into the market to compete for job vacancies. However, the effects of the training programs were limited and subject to "salvationist" propaganda (Vieira, Reis & Sobral, 2017), showing fragmented implementation, little interface with propaedeutic education¹⁷, vulnerable to changes between presidential terms, and lack of impact assessments. Despite regulatory advances since the 1990s and the expansion of wage relations in the 2000s, employment policies were narrow in their design and reach, an issue that followed the low average schooling level of the Brazilian population and the unequal access to job positions. Finally, we saw that a new stage of active policies began in 2018, a period that was not included in the scope of this article.

In Brazil, active policies play a limited role in the labor market management. Sine has low rates of both job placement and participation in total admissions, which has intensified with the destructuring of the labor market since the economic crisis of 2014 (Menezes, 2023). Furthermore, qualification programs have only included a small portion of the workforce, and hiring chances depend on the evolution of the occupational structure, which remained stable between 2006 and 2016 (Santos, Vaz & Oliveira, 2019). This prevented the allocation of workers in non-manual occupations, despite the schooling of the Brazilian population that took place during the period. In other words, the effectiveness of professional qualification policies is not only a matter of good design, as it is conditioned by structural issues of the Brazilian labor market.

This article discussed the process of institutionalizing unemployment through active policies, a phenomenon that began in the 1960s and deepened in the 1990s. The history of active policies illustrates the construction of unemployment on the public agenda, as well as the development of different forms of labor market management: of a residual nature at the beginning of the Republic; by authoritarian means in 1930-45 and 1964-80, with a brief democratic experience between these two periods, when the continuity of some of the Vargas' policies was accompanied by administrative decentralization; and following the Brazilian democratization and the development of the social agenda since the mid-1980s, through the participation of the state, companies, and trade unions in a deliberative council.

The research also highlighted a shift in the ideas underlying active policies, characterized by an assimilationist tone until the 1980s (gradual and unambiguous absorption of the workforce by modern sectors), and an individualizing perspective from the 1990s (increasing competitiveness in a flexible and fragmented market). It remains to continue with this research agenda, incorporating the changes that have taken place since 2018 and identifying continuities or ruptures in relation to the previous models.

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Notes

1. In 1920, 71.2% of the population over the age of 5 was illiterate, a rate that had dropped to 46.7% by 1960 (Ferraro & Kreidlow, 2004).
2. Lima (2022) points to the greater organization of private agencies in the 1960s, with the support of part of the national press, which earned revenue from publishing job advertisements. This organization was followed by the forging of an alliance with the Ministry of Labor, aiming at institutionalizing private agencies, which culminated in the 1972 decision.
3. "The measure [formation of micro-employment agencies in the country's technical schools] aims to guarantee the training of students from these schools and is part of the structuring of the national employment system, which, through the joint work of private agencies and the Ministry, will allow the use of the labor force leaving school" (Jornal do Brasil, 1972).
4. These data were collected through the Access to Information Law based on requests sent to the Ministry of the Economy.
5. In 1997, ILO Convention 181 changed the understanding of private intermediation, considering the process of labor market flexibilization. However, ILO remained opposed to charging workers a fee.
6. Guimarães, Comin, and Leite (2001) highlight a turning point in the 1990s, when trade unions began to recognize vocational training as a relevant agenda.
7. The basic level did not depend on previous schooling. On the other hand, the technical level was directed to workers enrolled in or having completed high school, while the technological level corresponded to university education.
8. According to data collected through the Access to Information Law, Sine had 1,189 units in 2000, a number that had increased to 1,711 by 2009.
9. Since 1995, with a duration of 3 years, called multiannual agreements.
10. This change can be easily seen in the discourses on professional qualification policy in the 2004-2007 and the 2008-2011 Multiannual Plans.
11. Calculations based on FAT Financial Assessments, available at: <https://portalfat.mte.gov.br/execucao-financeira-do-fat/avaliacao-financeira-do-fat/>.
12. The letter can be read at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/projetos/expmotiv/emi/2011/19-mec%20mte%20mf%20mp%20mds.htm.
13. A very illustrative speech was given by President Dilma Rousseff in 2011, the transcript of which is available at: <http://www.biblioteca.presidencia.gov.br/audios/discurso-da-presidenta-da-republica-dilma-rousseff-durante-cerimonia-de-lancamento-do-programa-nacional-de-acesso-ao-ensino-tecnico-e-ao-emprego>.
14. According to the 2015 PNAD microdata, the average age of the adult workforce with no schooling was 58.9 years. For adults in the workforce who interrupted their education after

finishing elementary school, the indicator dropped to 42.5 years, and for adults in the workforce with a high school diploma, it dropped again to 37.21 years.

15. Data available in FAT Financial Assessments.

16. The data are available at: <https://www.fnde.gov.br/sigefweb/index.php/liberacoes>.

17. Between 2000 and 2010, some normative advances were aimed at integrating vocational education with regular secondary education. However, the articulation between professional qualification and propaedeutic education remained an ideal, revealing a gap between the norms and the practices of training programs (Ciavatta & Ramos, 2011).

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Inclusive language

The authors use inclusive language that acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities.

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