

YOUNG PRECARIOUS WORKERS AND THE TRADE UNION IN EDUCATION

THE EFFECTS OF EMPLOYMENT DESTANDARDIZATION ON TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION

Research paper n. 2

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The Research papers series are ongoing analyzes conducted by members of the CEDRA Research Committee. The notebooks are intended to reflect RO CEDRA's field work and the wider social struggles. They are intended to stimulate theoretical discussions, sharing experiences from organizational practices in the field and offer reflection on strategies and means of class struggle, thus trying to contribute to the political organization of the working class.

ABSTRACT: *In the past decades the status of education has changed considerably due to pressures of capital. One can observe this in the flexibilization of the labor force, in the process of gradual precarization and outsourcing of jobs. On the one hand, due to pressures of capital, the capitalist state prefers to employ young workers in non-standard forms of employment; on the other hand, private companies are able to privatize parts of public institutions and appropriate the surplus value produced. These pressures result in increasing internal segmentation of the labor force, and at the same time the structure of the labor force becomes more hierarchical. Our study shows how the class struggle, waged by capital through the bourgeois state, by constantly shaping the labor force according to the demands of the process of capital accumulation, reduces the power of public sector unions. The basis of the research is the issue of organizing in public institutions. We want to examine whether younger workers, who often work in non-standard forms of employment, are less active in trade union struggles and/or to what extent they are involved in the trade union movement in the education sector and what their views and specific issues are.*

KEY WORDS: *education, precariousness, trade union organization, modern capitalism, outsourcing, class struggle.*

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Modern capitalism, in its neoliberal form, attacked organized labor and restored the economic and political power of the capitalist class. In this way, it succeeded in subjugating those areas which, in the historical political form of the social democratic welfare state and in the countries of actually existing socialisms, were exempt from the market and universally accessible to everyone, regardless of his or hers material position. Today, we are witnessing the commodification of social reproduction institutions, which are increasingly operating under the dictate of market mechanisms and serving the needs of capital accumulation. In education, this is most evident on two levels: through pressure on costs and in production of commodities, useful to capital.

First, the pressure on costs is reflected in the increasing flexibility of the workforce: in the gradual precarization and outsourcing of jobs. On the one hand, due to pressures of capital, the capitalist state prefers to employ young workers in non-standard forms of employment; on the other hand, private companies are able to privatize parts of a public institution and appropriate the surplus value produced. The intrusion of market approaches into public institutions is already present in the way schools are managed, as they are increasingly driven by the profit motive and the leadership arbitrariness, rather than by providing quality services for the whole society.

Second, capital provides knowledge that helps increase productivity and improve the production process (improved machines, new technology, better disciplining techniques for workers, etc.), and knowledge that enables more efficient sales of products or services by subsuming the pedagogical and research process. The capitalist class can resort to a free and constant influx of skilled labor and scientific and technological research and innovation, which brings about cheaper production to produce relative surplus value.

Public education is increasingly becoming a service to capital, it is a source of technological innovation and a place to produce the specific skills needed to increase productivity and competitive relationships. At the same time, with the privatization of certain services or their segments, such as security, cleaning or school cafeterias, it is becoming a space for the accumulation of capital.

Despite the fact that trade unions, with their political power, can still force agents of capital to negotiate, and occasionally win some concessions for workers, it is becoming increasingly difficult to organize workers. Due to the increasing segmentation of the labor force, they focus on specific professional interests, and push the general class interests of labor into the background. The effects of labor segmentation also require new, more ambitious methods and practices for building collectives in education institutions. One can observe that the rigidity of the trade union movement, its methods and political strategies already has detrimental political effects for the working class in some areas.

The research paper examines the pressures put on labor in the part of social reproduction that provides appropriate education for the future labor force. By studying the situation in the field of education since 2018, we have been analyzing the issues of young pedagogical workers, arising from the non-standard forms of their employment and connected them with the needs for trade union organization at a class level. The research was focused on relations that, by increasing competition and maintaining hierarchical relationships between standard and non-standard employees, change and already affect the trade union organization of workers in education. The political form of the state is one of the central structural features of capitalist society. In its specific social form, it is capable of survival insofar as the economic reproductive

State, capital, the public sector and education

process remains a process of capital valorization. The capitalist state is not a tool in the hands of the ruling class, it is a *social relationship*. It is the institutionalization of the political processes of bourgeois society, in which the social forces are expressed, that is, the relations of domination and power in a class society. Formal equality, independence and freedom of market individuals are also manifested in the state as an expression of the capitalist political form. (see Hirsch, 2014, 11–17) This means that the bourgeois state, governed by the *rule of law*, protects the private property of every citizen. It is the protection of private property that provides the basis for exploitative capitalist relations, since those in a capitalist society, who possess no other property than their own labor power, must sell it and thus submit themselves to capital. (see Heinrich, 2013, 226–227)

Over the past decades, capital, through class struggle, has successfully subjugated the state. It has asserted its interests in the public sector, of which education is a part, so these processes are also strongly felt by public sector workers - teachers, nurses, social workers, care workers, guardians, etc.

The services provided by public education workers are funded by taxes on surplus value, which means that the state interferes in the immediate interest of capital and thus often encounters resistance - even though capital needs a skilled, educated workforce, which can be included in the production process. Despite the fact that the state enables the reproduction of the wage laborer through public education, the capitalist class puts pressure on the state with demands that are reflected in school managements restraining wage growth, increasing labor intensity,

introducing flexible jobs, dismissing workers, etc. Workers in education are therefore facing increasingly strict labor discipline under capitalist control in the form of punishments and rewards, and more recently, direct attacks on union representatives.¹ The direct effect of this kind of management is also reflected in the introduction of competitive relations between employees, as precarious employees are forced to compete with each other to extend their short-term employment contracts (see Krašovec, 2011, 60–61). Precarious and outsourced fixed-term workers, who are under direct pressure of capital are (in addition to the so-called wage group J, which includes, among others, the lowest paid workers in the public sector) the weakest link in the overall education structure, which has significant effects, both to their existences and to the political struggle of all workers.

Public sector unions

In the case of education, class struggle is integrated into the administrative apparatus of the bourgeois state in the form of social dialogue between representatives of the government and ministries and the trade union-organized working class. This is a neo-corporatist political structure, which provides representation to organized work, but at the same time limits it in a given institutional form for the needs of uninterrupted accumulation of capital (see Panitch, 1981).

¹ A trade union representative at the High School of Design in Maribor was fired in 2019 due to an extraordinary termination of his employment contract. The same procedure was also initiated against the educator and the union trustee in the Jarše Kindergarten in Ljubljana, which was stopped due to a wide support of the parents of the kindergarten children. This indicates a trend that the managements of public institutions are trying to discipline the trade union movement.

Public sector unions have a relatively high level of organization and action power, as they are able to mobilize their membership for protests and strikes. This was also shown in 2018, when around 25,000 teachers took part in the protest in Ljubljana, and an additional 40,000 stopped their work. The mobilization activities were extensive, and for the first time, the unions also conducted internal voting on the strike, thus involving all members in their political and field activities.

This show of strength forced the new government into negotiations, which led to a general increase in public sector wages; the teaching staff and those in higher positions gained the most, while those in the lowest positions gained the least. Also, some key, long-standing problems have not been eliminated: the position of salary group J (which has been hit twice - underpaid and without the possibility of promotion), assistant educators, cooks, cleaners, nurses, care workers, guardians, etc. Also, the unions did not achieve a 100% guarantee that the higher costs associated with the increase in wages would be covered by the state, which led to an increase in costs of services for kindergartens and retirement homes, thus passing these costs mainly to parents of preschool children and on the elderly. At the same time, the government is trying to introduce a new salary system for the public sector and renew career advancement. This would reduce the number of possible promotions an employee could have, and the management of public institutions would be given more powers in rewarding or punishing individual employees.

In the fight against the pressures of capital and the bourgeois state, trade union organization is limited primarily to the defense of the existing rights of its members, with the largest and best organized membership groups often at the forefront. Current day-to-day trade union activities focus on individual legal assistance to members, communication with

the public, and negotiations with government representatives. With such activities, the teachers' trade union movement maintains the economic position of the largest and best organized membership group, while those who are weaker and less numerous (younger precarious workers, cleaners, cooks, secretaries, assistant educators, etc.) are often removed from this process.

The inclusion of less organized or numerically smaller groups is only occasionally addressed, and the effort doesn't go beyond the standard trade union policy. But if the union's activity focuses on individual membership groups, and struggles to maintain their *relative position*, its reputation suffers and support for the efforts of organized labor - in this case, in particular, teachers - declines, as other groups can identify narrow, particular interests in union demands that are difficult to legitimize and defend.² Methodical, systematic fieldwork, inclusive and collective practices, would be needed, as they could lead to the organization of all segments of employees and to their struggle for the interests of the entire working class and for the public good.

What can we learn from the teacher struggles in the US, Argentina and Chile?

The recent union struggles in the education sector offer quite a few examples of such broad-based and inclusive practices. 2019 was marked by organized workers' protests against governments and corporations,

² The attempts of some trade unions to become exempt from the unified public sector wage system are such an example (eg the medical doctors' union).

and in some places even against their own unions. In many countries, e.g. in Chile, Argentina, Iran, the United States, and Poland, education workers found themselves in the front lines. Despite small successes and numerous defeats, the strikers opposed the governments and the political representatives of the capitalist class, by interrupting classes and by connecting with the local community and other unions. The demands of teachers' unions have not focused solely on the economic struggle for higher wages; with new organizational methods and strategies, trade union movements overcame narrow interests of workers in individual professions and their apparent conflicts with each other, and intensified the class struggle.

Teachers (like other public sector workers, such as caregivers, nurses, guardians, etc.) have the opportunity for creating broad solidarity support beyond the collective in the workplace due to their direct relationship with parents and young people. Through their activity and example, they can influence broad sections of the working class. Teachers' assistants, school cooks and cleaners are part of the community; people trust them because they care for and educate children and adolescents, warns Blanc (2019, 58–63). It could be added that this trust and support is not unconditional, but also related to the nature of the demands they make — the more universal the demands and the more in line with wider social struggles they are, the wider the support and reputation enjoyed by teachers or any other group of workers becomes.

In Chile, the teachers' strike in early June 2019 was supported by students as well as workers from various industries. In the Argentine province of Chubut, the striking teachers were supported by workers from the oil and metal industry. Together, they successfully blocked traffic in front of strategically important plants and thus put uniform pressure on capital (see Soul and Rodríguez, 2019). Gaining the support of parents, students

and the wider local community is a lengthy process that strikers have to go through, especially before they start a strike. Chicago teachers, united in the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), have been systematically forging strong alliances with surrounding local organizations since 2011, especially those operating in the poorest, predominantly black-Latino areas of Chicago. By unifying requirements and setting common goals, their 11-day strike in 2019 intervened in the broader field of social policy and created strong solidarity ties between the working class. In the fight for wider goals, teachers' unions have established strong solidarity links with medical and social workers, students and the wider local community (see Maass, 2019).

In Arizona and West Virginia, teachers took every opportunity to talk to parents and students a few months before the official vote for the 2018 strike. They organized a number of local campaigns (street rallies, wearing red T-shirts, "occupying" viaducts, distributing leaflets and leaving short messages on public transport, morning meetings with parents, etc.) to alert the public about the conditions in which they perform their jobs, and most importantly, what they are fighting for. Personal contacts were also important as well as conversations with people on the streets and door-to-door agitation (see Blanc, 2019, 58–63).

Addressing the broader political issues around which workers and the local community can unite is a necessary step towards a wider organization of workers. In Chicago, teachers created mass political pressure by shifting the struggle from a "pure" economic one to a broader mass struggle with common demands. The struggle was aimed against privatization and financial cuts to public education, the protection of migrants' rights, increased scholarships, greater access to urban housing, free public transport and tackling homelessness among young people (see Maass, 2019). At the beginning of June 2019, around 65,000 teachers

went on strike in Chile, demanding, among other things, that the status of educators and special pedagogical workers be equated with the status of teachers, as they had so far received only a minimum wage which didn't allow them to meet their basic needs (see Left voice, 2019).

Only by forming a broad front of workers can common goals and organized power of the working class be formed. In order to strengthen the labor movement, it is important to connect and organize atomized workers, with an emphasis on the unionization of those segments of the labor force that capital forces into more flexible forms of employment.

By organizing all employees in a joint organization, regardless of profession or job, they can successfully oppose institution or company management. The success of the strike can be guaranteed only by a high level of worker cooperation and coordination. Joint struggles strengthen workers' solidarity and common class interests. Policy discussions, education and other activities are needed to overcome the fragmentation of the working class. In West Virginia, political topics have become a regular feature of discussions between teachers in cabinets, chambers, and at lunchtime (cf. Blanc, 2019, 49–50).

Due to the growing combat readiness of the working class, the question of the strike must be raised again: is it merely a form of economic or also a political struggle? Trade union struggles, although mostly purely economic, keep workers in a fighting mood (cf. Marx, 1853). The history of the workers' struggles teaches us that the working class can unite and establish itself as a political force only through class struggle,³

³ “The separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors.” (Marx and Engels, 1998: 85)

which is at the same time a political act. In the trade union struggle, the working class can analyze new experiences and ideas and strengthen solidarity. Through collective action, valuable conclusions can be drawn about the strategy and tactics of both classes.

Teacher strikes in the U.S. are already gaining a political connotation and may take the form of political weapons; this is how workers are able to shape their own interests, which are separate from the interests of the ruling class. Meanwhile, the initial uprisings of Chilean teachers have already escalated into general strikes by all workers, calling for a comprehensive systemic change. By establishing self-organized democratic bodies and coordinating committees, they want to elect a workers' constituent assembly, which would freely and sovereignly prepare a new constitution. The realization that the existing state apparatus is merely the apparatus of the ruling class, with which the bourgeoisie subjugates the greater part of the population, is proof of the ideological and organizational maturity of the Chilean class struggle (cf. Glaser, 2019).

Compared to the countries of South and North America, Slovenia has not yet experienced the complete disintegration of welfare state institutions, which were created by the past socialist society and workers' mobilization in the first years of transition to capitalism, to which the mobilization of public sector unions also contributed. The unionization of workers in education is high, as is their mobilizing power. Nevertheless, all unions that still defend the interests of the working class, remain pushed to the margins of political life, and the working masses are excluded from political processes (cf. Močnik, 2010, 198–199; Bembič, 2017). Trade union struggles are often economic, as they only fight for higher wages (where those who are already in a better material position benefit more), while the political dimension of their activities is largely ignored. Also, many unions are facing a decline in membership.

However, the biggest issue is the organization of young workers, who are defined more by their precarious employment than by their age. (Broder, 2016).

The answer to how to fight the fragmentation of the labor force in education is in the solidarity between relatively well-organized teaching staff and the unorganized workers, which the trade union movement can achieve by politicizing membership and including precarious and outsourced workers. Workers in education can overcome the bare economic struggle, unite the local community and support other workers' struggles through collective problem-solving, mass participation and systematic education. This would be a major step towards a mass organization of the working class, capable of resisting the exploitation and political domination of capital.

Case Study

The position of young workers and relations between employees in education — lessons for trade union organization

We have shown in the introduction how the position of education, due to the pressure of capital, has changed over the past decades. Capital's pressure on the value of labor has led to significant changes in the technical composition of the labor force⁴ in the public sector. In this case study, we want to illustrate the political effects of the growing internal segmentation of the labor force, leading to its structure becoming hierarchical.

Public education' position in the production process places it at the heart of social reproduction, which means that collective political actions in the education sector affect more workers, not just employees. At the same time, due to education being funded from the state budget, the success of political actions depends on the support of the broad working masses, who can either support the unions and put pressure on the government, or deny support and make it easier for the state to fight against the unions. Described examples of successful labor struggles from abroad show that public sector unions can take the lead in social struggles and establish a solidarity bond with the wider community, enabling workers to build many collective practices that extend beyond their own jobs and from which they can draw their political power in the struggle against capital and the capitalist state. The case study tackles the same problem from the opposite side. It shows how the class struggle waged by capital through the bourgeois state reduces the power of public sector unions by constantly segmenting and hierarchizing the labor force, shaping it according to the requirements of the capital accumulation process. In other words, the study shows the disruptive effects produced by labor segmentation in the pedagogical process. But if segmentation is already producing a negative effect on solidarity within the teaching profession, undermining the power of the union, we can expect that the negative

⁴The concept of the technical composition of the labor force is borrowed from Italian Marxist theorists of operaismo. We understand it as an aspect of overdetermination, which defines a set of relationships in which an individual worker is involved, insofar as these relationships are formed by capital or the capitalist state in order to adapt the labor force to the needs of the accumulation process. The concept of the technical composition of the labor force is complemented by the the political composition of the working class, which means the politicization of labor and its establishment into a collective subject at a historical moment in which labor transcends the fragmentation of the technical composition imposed by capital and achieves political unity (see Cedra's Research paper, no. 1.).

effects of the growing segmentation between relatively well-organized public sector professions and other labor groups will be even more devastating to the political unity of the working class in general, and especially for the position of organized workers in education.

Young employees in the eyes of surveyed union representatives - calculated individualists?

The issue of organizing in public institutions has been the base of the research. We wanted to check whether younger workers are less active in trade union struggles and/or to what extent they are involved in the trade union movement in education, and at the same time, what are their views and specific issues. Due to the high levels of unionization and a dense network of union representatives, we decided to conduct a survey among them. In it, we asked them about their union work, the position of young employees and their inclusion in the union and wider labor issues. The survey questionnaire was sent to all trade union representatives via the centralized electronic communication channel of the trade union organization. The response was good, as the questionnaires were filled out by as many as 85% of union representatives.

The results of the survey provided enough material for detailed research, but here we will highlight only three points. First, the demographic characteristics of the surveyed representatives showed that they were, on average, around 50 years old. Second, the majority (40 percent)⁵

⁵ About 34 percent answered that the expectations of young people do not differ from the expectations of the elderly, 27 percent chose the answer “I don’t know” for this question.

of surveyed union representatives considered that *the expectations of younger employees (up to 35 years old) differ from the expectations of older ones*. Third, the justifications for the answers of the surveyed union representatives, who answered in the affirmative to the question about the differences in expectations between older and younger employees, showed that they see younger workers as opportunistic individuals who pursue only personal, individual benefits, and perceive the union as a tool to realize these aspirations. There is also a perception that young people are not able to show solidarity with older colleagues, who may have a lesser workload, and are paid better.

... Younger people only look at [what] they will gain, they do not have a sense of solidarity

... they expect rights without wanting to be actively involved in the effort to acquire them. They carefully calculate what they get for the membership fee they pay - if it's worth it ...

... Young people mostly expect benefits from the union, but they are not willing to contribute or sacrifice anything for the union, at least in our collective.

As far as those under 35 are concerned, however, they want higher salaries. They compare their work with the work of older co-workers, who have already been promoted. Solidarity with older workers is declining because they do not work "all day", they dare to take time off, have more days of annual leave and are better paid. Their thinking has changed. If you can no longer work as fast and efficiently as young people, you should quit your job; die. Altruism is only perceptible to personal friends, but in general it has disappeared. General knowledge is declining, interest in what is happening in the country and the world has disappeared,

they are not reading anything and they are not interested in anything that is not related to them personally. They do not expect anything from the future and they find it increasingly unfair to have to contribute for pensions because they will not have pensions themselves.

(Survey among union representatives, 2018)

In short, the results of the survey showed that union representatives, who are generally older, often see and present young workers as individualists who strive for personal gain and do not understand the collective principles of trade union organization.

We were interested in whether cultural characteristics, such as generational differences, which seem to manifest themselves as opportunism and a rejection of solidarity social practices by younger workers, really divide the labor force. Therefore, after receiving survey opinions from union representatives, we conducted research interviews with six pedagogical workers under the age of 35. The interviewees were both union and non-union members. In the interviews, we asked them in depth about their material situation, the characteristics of the work process, the sources of potential conflicts and political organization in the workplace.

Extending the research to include a view from the “other side” revealed that there is an apparent divide of interest among the labor force in education. This divide stems from the structural position that each group occupies in the segmented composition of the workforce. On the one hand, young people are more often precariously employed, and on the other hand, older people are employed on regular, full time employment contracts. The answers given by both individual groups of labor reflect a view, limited by the concrete material position of a particular group.

The priorities of younger workers are, in fact, different from the priorities of the rest of the membership, and it is also true that they are less involved in trade union activities. Their different attitude, however, is not rooted in the cultural characteristics of different generations, but rather in a different material position, which significantly differs from the material position of the older, regularly employed workers. Focusing on the apparent self-interests based on cultural differences can lead to conflict between the two segments of the workforce.

As we will show below, the segment of workers who are in a weaker position in the technical composition of the workforce due to precarious employment - usually younger employees - find it harder to take the initiative or otherwise stand out if they do not feel the support of the collective and the union. As such, the younger labor force is obedient, disciplined, and ready for a high work intensity. Therefore, the additional burdens that arise partly due to the flexibility required for a smooth running of the work process (eg compensating for sick leave) and partly due to the desire to achieve high standards at a given level of employment (eg some extracurricular activities), most often fall on them. Full-time employees are not ready to accept additional flexibility or unpaid work that the management would like to impose, and of course they also have the support of the union. For younger, precariously employed workers, the position of a regularly employed worker is therefore seen as an “unjustified privilege”, and the trade union as a tool for enforcing and maintaining these supposed “privileges”. The effects are extremely disruptive in terms of the strength of the collective and the workers’ organization - in the pursuit of equality, young people are willing to agree to nullify the past achievements of the labor movement because they see them as the main reason for the difference between their position and that of regular, full-time employees.

Material situation of young interviewees

The material situation in which young pedagogical workers find themselves is structurally different from the position of their older colleagues with standard, regular jobs. Young employees in education can be employed in non-standard forms of employment for many years: they fill in as substitutes for sick leave and maternity leave, often they are only employed part-time for an indefinite period, etc. At the same time, a frequent feature that accompanies precarious employees is the change of the public institution in which they work.

Otherwise, I have about six years of work experience after the internship. I was lucky to get a paid internship, because back then they were still available, right; now it's hard to get that too. After this I worked ... - this is my fifth job, my fifth employer. Everything was for a short period, ie sick leave, maternity leave, and then a job vacancy opened for me with a bit of luck, so i got regular full time employment. So now I am employed for an indefinite period of time for the second year, which is ... [...] So now my first year I am employed indefinitely. The first year, however, was a trial year. [...] So otherwise not quite full employment. I am 70% employed regularly, and 30 % for a shorter contract. I hope the whole employment will become a full-time regular indefinite employment this year.

(Azra, high school teacher, June 2018)

The type of employment is currently [...]I am 50 % employed for an indefinite period of time and the rest for a shorter term contract. But I hope to get 100% for indefinite employment time. [...] The first and second years I had a limited-time contract, the second year also for a limited period of time, but when you change schools, this is not a problem. However, if you have been in the same

institution for two years, then you already have to get the employment contract of indefinite duration ... Supposedly.

(Johnny, elementary school teacher, August 2018)

Their position, therefore, does not offer them long-term material security, and their individual reproduction is thus endangered. At the same time, the wages are, in regard to the high work intensity, workloads and pressures, relatively low. Therefore, it is all the more interesting that the demand for a higher wage among young workers is not at the top of their priorities.

Young interviewees: non-wage related demands at the forefront!

The material situation in which young workers find themselves also dictates their demands. They do not identify, for example, with the union demands of older workers which are most often connected to wage policies. The young interviewees mainly highlighted other demands, such as secure employment, which they have not yet received, the problem of excessive workloads and the issue of the relationship with the parents.

I think that this is a mistake. We just talk about wages and compare ourselves to doctors. I don't want to compare myself to a doctor because if I wanted to have a doctor's wage, I would probably go to medical college. Well, I didn't. [...]. Let's say. More jobs. Employing young workers. Mentorship. Not wages. [...] A shift from talking only about wages, because I think that the public opinion would then turn to substantive issues in the long run, that is, what a teacher is, what are fundamental problems in education and in the

school-parents relationship or, say, teacher-parents – management relations. [...] Yeah, also if we look at this aspect, how parents should perceive the education system in a different light - so they would be able to see high workloads, and the unstable employment of teachers. Also, the problem of too few internships being available and how difficult the situation is for young teachers in general.

(Azra, high school teacher, June 2018)

They also want better working conditions and employment of additional staff, which would improve the quality of public service and relieve teachers, as young teachers are often the ones who receive the greatest burdens when scheduling work.

At this point, I would immediately say more employees. [...] The additional 40 euros per month are meaningless, when I almost tear myself apart with work. I would rather see that there would be more teachers in extended stay and smaller classrooms. This would benefit pupils in particular, and it would also benefit my work, which would be done better. Now I would like to do a lot more things, but I can't because I'm alone, or because the pupils can't because there are too many of them.

(Ekaterina, special and rehabilitation pedagogue, July 2018)

Are young workers facing their issues alone?

Young workers in education face specific problems arising from their structurally different position. As a result of the change in the employment relationship, the way of managing people, which is based on flexibility, also changes. The direct effect on the labor force is reflected in the introduction of competitiveness, where precariously employed

workers compete with each other to extend their short-term contracts. Young workers are, therefore, willing to take on additional burdens, thus prolonging their working hours, intensifying their work intensity, stress, etc., sometimes having to give up the already achieved gains of previous workers' struggles, such as annual leave. In addition, they feel a lack of political power, as flexibility makes it difficult for them to connect with the collective, and sometimes they are even excluded from the decision-making process. In order to buy peace of mind and not accumulate additional problems with the school management, they are quickly ready to give in to the growing pressure of parents, at the expense of which they reduce the complexity and quality of lessons. Problems can also arise when taking leave, as employees can only spend it during the time set by the minister with the school calendar (holidays) - but for some, the contract expires at that time.

I was hired from XX to June, and with that I automatically get vacation days which I will never be able to use. There just aren't enough holidays in between to use all the leave days. Eg. here the union could be the one to press and demand that these unused days be paid anyway. But instead they go to waste, at least in my case...

(Ekaterina, special and rehabilitation pedagogue, July 2018)

You don't have that ... nor the political power inside; if you have a fixed-term contract, you cannot elect a principal, you probably can't [elect] any representatives to the school council... You don't have any political power. [...] Now, I don't know exactly, but I remember one time I couldn't (vote) Well, I think that was wrong. What is going on? I can't? Am I not a full member of this community? Although I worked the way the others did, but only for 50 %, and I couldn't vote.

(Johnny, elementary school teacher, August 2018)

The precarization of the workforce goes beyond the disciplinary mechanism that allows over-exploitation. To the extent that the processes of flexibilisation and precarization affect certain groups of employees (in our case young workers) more than others, they produce extremely strong ideological effects. Due to their weaker position, young teachers find it harder to defy the pressure from management, so a lot of the additional burden in the education sector falls on their shoulders. Accordingly, their problems do not appear to them as what they are - that is, as an indirect effect of the pressures of capital on the value of labor in the public sector - but as a result of unequal treatment. Therefore, the rights enjoyed by full-time older employees appear to them as undeserved privileges.

I would also like to point out that young teachers are very burdened with extra work and are somehow expected to do it. You don't say no, especially if you have a more flexible job [...] It can be seen - the bigger workload for younger people, or those who do not have a permanent job, they just find it harder to say no. This aspect is certainly present. This person just won't say no, he'll do what is asked of him, while an older colleague may find it easier to avoid something. Older colleagues, they don't even have a sense of what it's like, especially if they don't have children of their own. These are parallel worlds, they have no idea.

(Azra, high school teacher, June 2018)

I think young workers are very fair for the most part. The employer, however, is not fair. Because he takes advantage of us eg.: if you want to have a job, accept certain things, and then we'll consider things in September (when the employment contract is supposed to be re-extended). I didn't want to fight so I said ok, but all the time this didn't seem fair to me. Especially from their side. It's true, though, that I realize I only have a guaranteed job till September. At the same time, I know that this cannot happen to an older teacher because he has an employment contract for indefinite time.

(Ekaterina, special and rehabilitation pedagogue, July 2018)

Whose union?

Young workers are often unfamiliar with the trade union organization and trade union activities in their work environment, at least not in a way they would recognize as being beneficial for solving their problems. The trade union organization seems foreign and remote to them, but at the same time they notice that the majority of its members are older, regularly-employed workers. Therefore, younger, precarious workers often do not see the union as an organization that would fight for the interests of the whole collective and protect precarious workers from over-exploitation, but as an interest organization of older employees who - in their opinion - enjoy seniority privileges and are interested only in narrow, economic interests, while the employment of younger members is precarious and does not (yet) provide them with material security in the long run.

It seems to me that the union is fighting too little for younger employees, and only fighting for those who are already in a good position. But it is a difficult situation for young people who have bad contracts or who want to get promoted, especially if you don't know the right people. It depends on the attitude of the principal, what kind of ethical attitude does he have, it seems to me. The union is not talking about these issues, at least I didn't hear that. It is fighting for those who already have contracts, who already have stable employment [...] If at least a union representative in the school would come to me, and at least ask me, when I was employed for 50 %, "Hey, you, what are you going to do next year? Come on, join us, we're going to fight and try to get you permanent employment," and I'd say, "Oh, great". But it's always reserved for those who already have a permanent, stable employment

(Johnny, elementary school teacher, August 2018).

Young employees often see the union as a foreign organization that ignores their precarious employment problems and burdens. When they manage to express at least the implicit need for an organization that would organize workers into a single collective, they sometimes demand their own union.⁶

Political effects of such demands are: disintegration of solidarity; instead of class conflict, “generational” conflict

The fictitious division of interests between the two groups of workers disintegrates the connection and solidarity within the collective. Young workers see their older colleagues as “insiders” who enjoy undeserved privileges and don’t care about the unenviable position of young precarious workers. Their own situation is seen as a result of unequal treatment, so they see the achievements of labor struggles - which they themselves cannot enjoy – as undeserved privileges that allow older,

⁶ There is an increasing fragmentation of workers going on as a result of the technical composition of the workforce, which is undermining workers’ solidarity and cohesion. Many private sector unions even refuse to organize precarious workers as they perceive them as undesirable competition. Due to being exempt from workers’ organizations, many are willing to set up their own trade unions to represent their interests. Trade union pluralism often manifests itself as a negative phenomenon, as individual workers’ organizations are incapable of cooperating and even hinder their efforts. Trade unions in the public sector have so far acted more uniformly, being forced to do so by the universal wage system, but the trend is changing. Labor flexibility is becoming more common, which means that the public sector shares the same fate as the rest of the economy, and is increasingly facing the consequences of social stratification among workers, which is also confirmed by our research.

full-time employees to shake off their workloads which then lands on the shoulders of young workers. For example, some advocate greater flexibility in rewarding successful workers, which - in their view - would enforce meritocracy. Flexibility is even advocated by some in regards to laying off full time employees. From their point of view, young people see equality as a renunciation of labor struggle benefits by their older colleagues, which have supposedly been won by seniority and not labor struggles.

They are ready to achieve equality by lowering the level of workers' rights, which is extremely detrimental to collective action and the trade union movement.⁷ The pressure of capital on the labor force in the public sector thus becomes a matter of relations between labor groups, and the class conflict is mystified into an intergenerational one.

I find the problem in stimulating the one who works. That seems like a problem to me in education. Because where I have worked, there is let's say 30% of those who do hard work and 30% of those who are working so-so and 30% of those who, I will say, do nothing, they say "I won't do this" and go home. And the principal just says, "OK." And I think it may also be a mistake that the principal has in the selection ... that they should be less involved in selecting the teaching staff ... principals should also need to have the option of laying off workers, of more flexibility in the workplace, because, let's be honest, when you get a regular, full time job at a school, you are relatively well protected, you cannot be fired unless you hit someone or commit some violence.

⁷ A similar problem can be found in the issue of "leveling", where some workers problematize the minimum wage increase. Some segments of the working class being stuck with extremely low wages, which are too low to cover the basic costs of living aren't perceived as a huge issue, insofar the gap between lower and higher wages is wide enough. This also poses a difficulty for organizing workers on a class basis.

I think there should be flexibility here for those who do not want to work, or are late for work, the principal should have an autonomous decision. Because laying off a worker is almost impossible.

(Azra, high school teacher, June 2018)

The trade union movement remains trapped in day-to-day work and negotiations at the state level, leaving solidarity policies of workers' organization in the background and leaving the weakest segments of labor to fend for themselves. Capital or the bourgeois state can then break up workers' collectives and fragment the labor force by putting pressure on costs of labor. Their position forces young workers to solve problems individually and to establish links with people with the same work experience or decision-making power - ie. with management as it can provide them with protection in exchange for various services. In these circumstances, the ability to mobilize membership in support of collective bargaining is a deceptive guarantee of union power; silent battles inside institutions may be decisive, where institution administrations, behind closed doors, subjugate labor and destroy the union organization.

Young people can show solidarity

The remarks of the surveyed union representative, who believe that young workers pursue their particular interests and are not ready for collective action within the union, can be understood on the basis of the given analysis. Young precarious workers face different problems than regular, full time employees, so their priorities are also different, and if they do not see the union as an organization which could help solve their problems, they will not join the union. However, their attitude towards

trade unions and collective action stems from the structural situation in which they find themselves and not from the “individualism of their generation”. This is also indirectly confirmed by interviews, which showed that young workers are not individualists without a sense of solidarity. On the contrary, our interviewees were relatively sensitive to the problems of other segments of labor - outsourced workers, cleaners, cooks, etc. - the segment of workers who are not directly employed in the activities of education and who are in an even worse financial situation than themselves:

Let's support, I don't know, retail workers who work for a minimum wage, who are overworked. It really does not seem to me that these issues are present in the public sector and in education, where the working conditions and wages are not so poor. I think the conditions are worse in the private sector. However, wages could be higher, but also lower. It would seem to me the only right thing to do would be something like this. We are connected anyway, but currently everyone fends for themselves; we should be more connected.

(Johnny, elementary school teacher, August 2018)

My personal opinion is that a teacher's salary when he gets promoted and reaches a certain salary level, is not bad. That is honestly my opinion. I think the salary is fine. That is why we say that the load can only be those 20 hours. [...] It could respond, whether it's school or not. Regarding violations of labor rights or labor laws in other sectors as well, not necessarily only in education. This would also improve the public reputation in the long run. That would be a smart move. Not only did the union respond to public sector problems or narrow education, but also to other things. The union would gain a reputation, and above all, it would show that it also cares about the parents of children who go to school and who are part of the learning process. That would be the

smart way to go. Our union and teachers in general have an extremely bad reputation in the public. That is why our bargaining power in politics is as it is.

(Azra, high school teacher, June 2018)

I think it doesn't matter if it represents something complete. The school is supposed to be a complete entity. The cleaners are also known by the parents, the cooks, we are all one entity, so yes, the union should support them.

(Britney, high school teacher, July 2018)

Discussion

The research paper deals with the effects of the pressure from capital and the bourgeois state on the public sector, which in the form of a specific technical composition of the labor force (segmentation of the labor force) undermines the power of trade unions. In the first part of the volume, we showed the impact that the growing subsumption of public education by capital has on the position of the labor force. This is mainly manifested in the form of destandardization of the employment of pedagogical staff (fixed-term and/or part-time contracts) and in outsourcing of work, especially in the so-called support activities (eg cleaning and cooking), which thus become a place of direct capital accumulation. In this context, the focus of relatively strong and well-organized trade unions in education on maintaining the relative position of core occupational groups, risks widening the divide spontaneously generated by pressures from capital and the state. The disruptive effects that undermine internal cohesion, the strength of the union and, last but not least, weaken the defensive power of central occupational groups in the long run, were shown in the case study.

The case study showed how pressures from capital and the bourgeois state manifest in the form of segmentation of the labor force. These effects can be distinguished on at least two levels. First, segmentation produces a gap between the short-term economic interests of union membership: precarization is a force that disciplines younger employees and allows management to place a disproportionate share of the burden of flexibility which is required to maintain a smooth workflow at a given level of employment (e.g., replacements, extracurricular activities) on the shoulders of young workers, without triggering a conflict with the union's relatively well-organized full-time labor force. As the situation of full-time employees does not appear to be an effect of the inequality they are faced with, young workers are ready to support an "equalization of the working conditions downwards", they are ready to support measures for increasing flexibility in general and strengthening the power of management at the expense of workers' collectives. In other words, systemic pressures on some employees (young precarious workers) are thus intensifying and becoming a lever of pressure on the entire labor force.

Second, the question arises as to whether a similar logic also applies at a broader level. First of all, there are workers who work in the public sector, but are not a part of it. We pointed out at the outset that in addition to young (pedagogical and non-pedagogical) workers in the public sector, there is another segment of employees that remains largely disorganized and is in a very subordinate position. These are employees in those parts of the public sector that have been privatized and as such are areas for capital accumulation. Outsourcing is an important method of increasing surplus value. Outsourcing these services reduces the value of the labor force by differentiating its working conditions - these workers are directly subordinated to capital and work under conditions that apply in the private sector, as they are not covered by public sector collective

agreements - in this way they provide cheap services for the public sector. In addition, outsourcing of jobs enables capital a direct appropriation of the surplus value that these outsourced workers create.

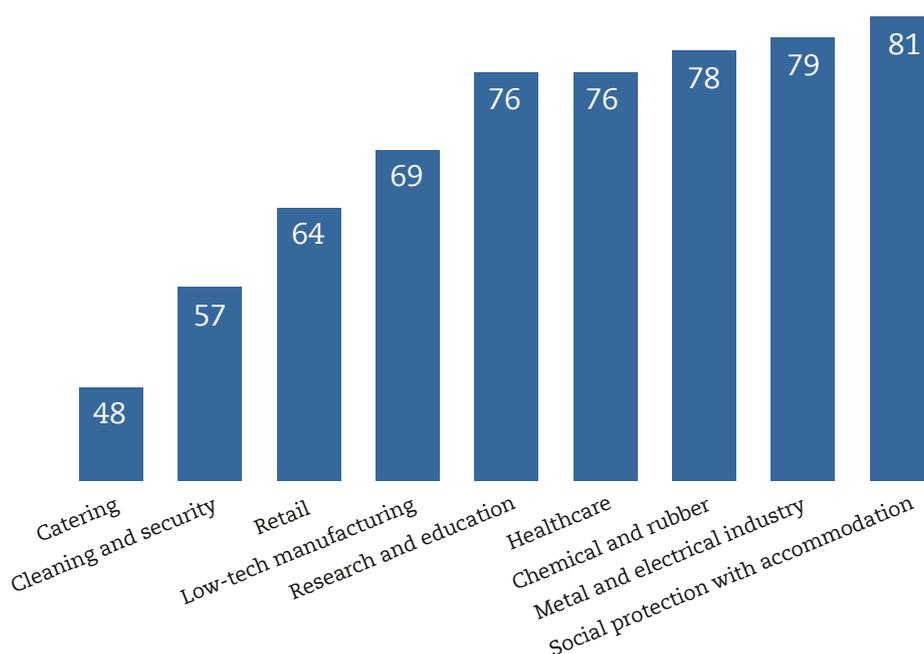
In this way, capital and the bourgeois state reorganize the technical composition of the labor force, exposing some of its segments to even stricter discipline and exploitation, which, as the following quote from an interview with a public sector cleaner shows, can be extremely brutal:

He gets there and just looks at what you're doing. Then he insults you, attacks you or interrupts your lunch, saying: "Take the trash bags, the cleaning materials and get to work!" ?? And some women leave because they were contractual workers. [...] But when you were "moonlighting" they provoked, humiliated, insulted, cursed you ... We said, the area is too huge, when are they going to reduce it, that we're not animals, and even animals get better treatment. All of us said this. Then they told us, "Be quiet! Silence! You will all get fired!"

(Meryl, Cleaner, May 2018)

From the viewpoint of capital, these workers are easily replaceable. Other arguments that support this are : the ease with which management transfers workers between different institutions and even from city to city, without any special education or training; a high worker turnover, which clearly does not hinder companies from doing business; low average levels of education, which indicates that long-term formal training is not required for the job. On the other hand, the structure of the labor force - often older women, mostly with primary education, some being migrants; the second group are people with disabilities - shows that the company draws its workforce from groups that do not have many alternative employment opportunities. The balance of power in this segment is particularly unfavorable from the point of view of labor, while capital

can swing unconditional power - and this is why the need for concrete solidarity support from public sector unions is even more urgent. Is it any wonder that, in its absence, the position of public sector workers takes on the appearance of an undeserved privilege? We can assume that the mechanism that causes the split and provides support for “downward equalization” is the same as in the case of young precarious workers - after all, the gap is even greater here, but therefore no more justified.



Percentage of employees in standard forms of employment by industry, 2017. Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: CSA, own calculations.

Lastly, could one not recognize a mechanism similar to the one that incites young precarious men and women in education against full-time employees among workers in retail, catering, industrial cleaning, security, etc.? These are the industries that make up the so-called precarious services sector (see figure) - in relation to employees in the public sector, where working conditions are much better? In this precarious sector, trade union organizing is particularly difficult, as these industries are deregulated and employ workers without special skills who are quickly replaceable. Would it be too much to argue that these

differences bring new divisions and shift conflicts from the class level to the level of struggles between different groups of workers? We often see that disorganized private sector workers - much like precarious young workers in education - perceive public sector workers as parasites who enjoy undeserved privileges, and do not support public sector strikes.

Labor organization in education is relatively high, making it easier for employees to strike, but although the workers formally make demands towards the government, the support of the public is always key to the strike's success. Therefore, it is especially important for public sector unions to open up class issues, to fight for accessible and quality public services, and help organize the working class in general. If they focus only on the economic benefits of their membership and ignore the precarious service sector, they will further strengthen the divisions among the working class imposed by capital at the national level. The organization of the precarious sector is probably the greatest challenge and at the same time the most important task of organized labor - without this struggle it will be impossible to break the division and fragmentation of labor that is imposed by capital, or to establish conditions for political unity of the working class. Of course, this is not the final task of organized labor - but without solving it, a unified approach of the working class and thus further steps in the struggle against capitalist exploitation and subordination cannot be imagined.

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AND THE TRADE UNION IN EDUCATION
THE EFFECTS OF EMPLOYMENT DESTANDARDIZATION
ON TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION**

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