

THEY ARE HERE: TEACHERS' NARRATIVES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MINING COMPANIES AND SCHOOLS¹



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ABSTRACT

This article identifies and analyzes the practices built in the relationship between mining companies and schools in the context of the Fundão Dam collapse. The rupture, which occurred in 2015, has impacted the ways of producing and reproducing life in the affected region. The work was anchored in the concept of Pedagogical Silence, conceived to name the existence of a silencing in school practice on the theme of the rupture and the consequent socio-environmental damage of mining. Among the factors that produce silence, the relationship between mining companies and schools is identified. To this end, it was sought to identify how teachers understand this relationship through the results of three researches carried out through narrative interviews. 12 interviews were used with educators who work in the school in the village of Bento Rodrigues, in Mariana, and in schools in the district of Amarantina, in Ouro Preto. The results indicated that the companies establish the relationship through four actions: event financing; donation of school materials and uniforms; offer of continuing education for teachers; and active participation in activities that work on the theme of the Environment. Such actions, based on the teachers' narratives, are configured as evidence that the relationship between company and school contributes to building and maintaining the silence around the rupture and, therefore, the development of a critical perspective in relation to mining practice.

¹ The expression "They are here" is part of the narrative of the interview P4EC, one of the sources used for this article.

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INTRODUCTION

This article discusses how teachers understand the relationship of partnerships established between companies in the mining sector and schools in the context of the Fundão Dam (RBF) collapse. The RBF, which took place on November 5, 2015, in Mariana (Minas Gerais), caused economic, political, social, cultural and socio-environmental damage in 49 municipalities located in the Rio Doce Basin in the states of Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo. The mud, formed by iron ore tailings and everything that was dragged along the way, was carried by the water courses to the Atlantic Ocean. However, there are municipalities that were not fully recognized as affected, because they did not receive the physical mud. Ouro Preto, in Minas Gerais, for example, suffered effects such as unemployment, decreased revenue from municipal taxes linked to *ore royalties*, among others (Marques, 2024).

Since then, the RBF has been investigated in its causes and consequences by researchers linked to national and international institutions (Costa; Knop; Felipe, 2021). The Study Group on Education, Mining and Environment (GEMA), made up of professors, students and graduates of the Federal University of Minas Gerais and the Federal University of Ouro Preto, has studied the impacts of the RBF in the school context from the link between mining, disruption and the challenges of rebuilding the ways of producing and reproducing the lives of those affected. To this end, the group develops teaching, research, extension, events, and publications projects (Antunes-Rocha *et al.*, 2020; 2021a; 2021b; 2023; Antunes-Rocha, Hunzicker, Fantinel, 2020; Antunes-Rocha, 2023; Antunes-Rocha, Santos, 2024; Antunes-Rocha, Hunzicker, 2022; Hunzicker, Antunes-Rocha, 2022; Berezusky, 2023; Carvalho, 2022; Hunzicker, 2019; 2022; 2024; Jesus, 2025; Luz, 2023; Oliveira, 2021).

The results of these studies showed, among other findings, that the collapse and its impacts have not been worked on in school practice and, what draws attention is the way in which the mining theme and its socio-environmental damages are discussed in a way that does not contribute to a problematizing and multidisciplinary understanding of its economic, political, social and cultural dimensions. To better understand this process, the concept of "Pedagogical Silence" (Hunzicker, Antunes-Rocha, 2022b; 2023) was elaborated as a possibility to name, characterize, and give visibility to a practice that demands studies for a greater understanding of its causes and effects. Thus, Hunzicker

and Antunes-Rocha (2023) listed seven factors, identified from research, that structure Pedagogical Silence:

1- Idealization of mining as an economic practice in Brazilian history. 2- Socioeconomic link between the population and companies. 3- Actions of mining companies with schools. 4- Invisibility of different mining practices. 5- Geographical distance from large-scale mining enterprises. 6- Lack of knowledge of the (in)safety of dams located near schools or on school transport routes. 7- Initial and continuing teacher training with little emphasis on the articulation between economic context and school practice (Hunzicker; Antunes-Rocha, 2023, p. 159).

Based on this characterization, the GEMA research group has focused on the understanding of each of these factors, with the understanding that they are structured in a totality and, therefore, it is necessary to understand each one as part of a broader reality. To this end, Factor 3 – Performance of mining companies in schools – was selected as the theme of this article.

The relationship between companies and schools in Basic Education, in the mining context, has already been pointed out in other studies (Lima and Trein, 2015; Almeida, 2016; Alves *et al.*, 2020; Oliveira, 2021; Hunzicker, 2019; 2024). In the bibliographic survey on the subject, it was possible to identify that mining companies carry out pedagogical activities in schools in partnership with education departments and school managers, notably in activities related to Environment Week, in the distribution of teaching materials, in teacher training, in making improvements in physical spaces and in financial and logistical support for events. The "Ecological Magazine" distributed by the mining company Samarco to teachers in the municipal network of Mariana, in 2015, before the RBF, was used as a means of disseminating its results, such as "In 2014, the Gerdau Germinar Program benefited more than 8,500 students and educators. [...] in education, preservation and environmental awareness projects [...]" (Ecological Magazine, 2015, p. 16 *apud* Hunzicker, 2024, p. 50). In the post-breakup, the partnership continues with the offer of continuing education programs for teachers, teaching materials, and educational activities for students (Hunzicker, 2024). According to Alves *et al.* (2020, p. 70), these practices are constituted as "[...] business strategies to capture projects and training dynamics in mined territories; and, no less important, the dispute of narratives [...] to influence the contents and meanings of education".

In this sense, in this work, we sought to listen to teachers who work in schools located in the villages of Bento Rodrigues (Mariana) and in the District of Amarantina (Ouro Preto), with the objective of identifying how these professionals are elaborating their ways

of thinking, feeling and acting in relation to the presence of mining companies in the school daily life and the relationships that these processes establish in the construction of the Pedagogical Silence. To this end, data produced from three studies were sought. Surveys 1 and 2 were developed at the Bento Rodrigues Municipal School (Hunzicker, 2019; Antunes-Rocha *et al.*, 2020) and research 3 in schools in the District of Amarantina (Jesus, 2025).

CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

The Village of Bento Rodrigues, located in the rural area of the municipality of Mariana, was constituted in the eighteenth century due to mining activity. In the first two centuries, gold extraction predominated and, throughout the twentieth century, iron mining gained relevance. The practice has always been marked by the presence of international capital, by production for export and by tensions related to the forms of relationship with the environment and working conditions.

Before the RBF, the Bento Rodrigues Municipal School was located approximately 6 km from the Fundão Dam. It was registered with the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP) as a rural school. In 2015, it served 102 students in the initial and final years of Elementary School (Hunzicker, 2019). When it was hit by the RBF, the school was transferred to the headquarters of Mariana, where it went through two temporary addresses in almost 9 years of waiting for the construction of the new school. The deterritorialized school was inserted in a new social, cultural and economic context in the urban area of Mariana. Some students and teachers had their mental health impaired and underwent psychological care (Santos; Oak; Ribeiro, 2019).

During the period of reterritorialization of the school in the resettlement, Novo Bento Rodrigues, pedagogical activities were carried out in the new school to build the socio-territorial identity. The school was the first collective asset with the works completed in the resettlement, thus, it started operating in August 2023. At this time, the school had 132 students enrolled in the initial and final grades of elementary school (Hunzicker, 2024).

The RBF caused a deterritorialization of the village's dwellings (Hunzicker, 2024). Since then, they have experienced a process that involves a sudden change in their ways of life and housing, loss of all material goods, conflicts with the company, tensions in negotiations in the processes of reparation and compensation for damages, socio-emotional difficulties in adapting and surviving in almost a decade of waiting for the

reconstruction of homes. Given this scenario, teachers at the Bento Rodrigues School experience difficulties in dealing with the issue of disruption in their pedagogical practices (Hunzicker, 2022).

Figure 1 shows some images in which the materialization of the company's presence in the Bento Rodrigues School occurs before and after the collapse. The relationship is a naturalized process, it is not surprising, as the school advertises an event in which the company makes donations to the school on its social networks (Figure 1-A). Figure 1-B shows a workshop for the training of educators financed by the mining company Vale.

Figure 1 – Images with evidence of the company/school relationship in Bento Rodrigues



Source: Photo A: Facebook of the Bento Rodrigues School (2014), Photo B: Facebook of the Bento Rodrigues School (2016). Editing and publication by Hunzicker 2024 (p. 106).

Likewise, the offer of teaching materials by the company is considered a common procedure in the school routine. Figure 2 shows the company's logo and the name of the Program associated with the donation. Generally, teachers and students receive a copy that is used daily, thus fulfilling the pedagogical function of teaching by association of stimuli.

Figure 2 – Pencil of Samarco's Environmental Education Program



Source: Collection of Adriane Cristina de Melo

Like Bento Rodrigues, the history of Amarantina is related to mining practices. The beginning of its territorialization process took place in the colonial period by people who were looking for fertile land for the production of fruit and vegetables, in order to supply the mining region of the former Vila Rica, today Ouro Preto (Gaspar, 2010). After the RBF, a rock extraction activity installed in the late 1970s, close to the urban center, intensified production by providing raw material for the construction of dikes and repair works for the RBF (Samarco; Ecobility, 2022). In addition to this mining activity, another mining company, installed in the region, started, in 2021, the dry treatment of iron ore (SEMAD, 2021) and uses the main road in the locality to transport production (Jesus, 2025).

These mining activities in Amarantina have caused tensions and changes in the modes of production and reproduction of the lives of the district's residents. Examples of this are, among others, the forced sale of properties belonging to local residents through the Mining Easement⁵ (Brasil, 2021), regulated by Decree-Law No. 227, of February 28, 1967 (Brasil, 1967), and the changes in family farming that uses water from the Maracujá River and the Prata, Ponte de Pedra, dos Vieiras, Cambraia, do Riacho, dos Coelho, Soledade (Ouro Preto, 2011) to irrigate vegetable gardens. These tensions have generated the creation of residents' associations, holding meetings, dissemination in newspaper reports, mobilizations in the public square, participation in events organized by social movements. Figure 2 shows photos of banners posted by residents in Amarantina.

⁵ "[...] an instrument that aims to make mining enterprise viable. It is an area, located inside or outside the polygon of the title, for the installation of the structures necessary for the development of mining works" (Brasil, 2021).

Figure 3: Banners posted by residents of Amarantina



Source: Jesus, 2025 (Edited collection)

The education network in Amarantina is composed of the Municipal Schools "Major Raimundo Felicíssimo", "Padre Antônio Pedrosa" with extension at the "Ana Pereira de Lima" school and the State School Professor Maria do Carmo. In 2023, it had 716 students enrolled in Early Childhood Education, in the initial and final grades of Elementary School, in Full-Time High School, in Youth and Adult Education and in the Technical Course in Computer Science and, for this, it had 64 teachers.

The materialization of actions developed in schools in Amarantina is shown in Figure 4. Figure 4-A records the moment of delivery of uniforms donated to the Major Raimundo

Felicíssimo School by the Irmãos Machado Quarry (Irmãos..., 2023) and, Figure 4-B, an Environmental Education activity developed at the Padre Antônio Pedrosa Municipal School in the village of Maracujá (Amarantina) by the Avante Sustainability Program – Grupo Avante/Mineração Ferro Puro.

Figure 4 – Images with evidence of the company/schools relationship in Amarantina



Source: Photo A: Brothers..., (2023); Photo B: https://www.instagram.com/p/C4-1rIGuKeE/?img_index=1.
Editing and publication of Jesus (2025).

The study that gave rise to this text is driven by the question of how teachers have dealt with the presence of the company after the collapse. This is because the impacts on the ways of producing and reproducing life are exposed in the daily life of the population through social media, the movement of companies and workers involved in the repair works, marches, meetings, banners, the presence of researchers and public agencies that provoke debates about the company's responsibility in the RBF. Therefore, the question that arises is how teachers understand this presence today, considering that there is evidence that the relationship between company and school remains.

METHODOLOGY

The three surveys were carried out with educators through the application of 28 narrative interviews (Jovchelovitch; Bauer, 2003) to identify how these subjects are thinking, feeling and acting in relation to the collapse and the socio-environmental impacts of mining. For this work, four interviews were selected with teachers who work at the school in Bento Rodrigues, and eight at the schools in Amarantina, totaling 12 interviews.

In the research carried out by Hunziker (2019) at the Bento Rodrigues school, interviews with three teachers were selected, two male and one female. The two teachers live in the municipality of Santa Bárbara and the teacher in Ouro Preto. Their age at the time of the interviews was: 34, 42 and 43 years. They are teachers who have been working at the Bento Rodrigues school for less than 10 years, one teacher for 8 years, one teacher for 6 years and the other for 5 years. However, they have been working as teachers for 11 years, 22 years and 19 years, respectively. The three interviewees work in the final years of Elementary School. The professor studied undergraduate and graduate (master's) studies at two federal universities and the two interviewees attended undergraduate and specialization courses (*lato sensu*) at private higher education institutions.

The research conducted by Antunes-Rocha *et al.* (2020) selected an interviewed subject, identified as female. She is an effective teacher at the Bento Rodrigues school. At the time of the interview, he was 47 years old and had been working at the school for 21 years in the early years of elementary school.

In the work developed by Jesus (2025), in Amarantina, eight interviews were selected. A total of four teachers who work at the Major Raimundo Felicissimo Municipal School, one at the Padre Antônio Pedrosa Municipal School, one at the Ana Pereira de Lima School and three at the Professora Maria do Carmo State School. Six female teachers and two male teachers. Three live in Amarantina and the others live in Cachoeira do Campo, Ouro Preto, Itabirito, Mariana and Belo Horizonte. With ages ranging from 35 to 59 years old, two teachers have been teaching for less than five years in schools in Amarantina, two have been teaching between 6 and 10 years, two between 11 and 15 years old and two for 16 years or more. Four teach at the education level, three for Early Childhood Education and Early Years of Elementary School, three for the Final Years of Elementary School, one for High School and one for High School and Youth and Adult Education.

The interviewees are identified in this article by means of a code composed of a number identifying the survey (Survey 1 – P1; Research 2 – P2; Research 3 – P3), by the letter E as an abbreviation for interviewee, followed by letters in alphabetical order (EA, EB, EC, and so on). Thus, the interviewees will be named as provided in Chart 1.

Chart 1 – Organization and identification of empirical sources

Research	Codes	Interviewees
HUNZICKER, Adriane Cristina de Melo. The collapse of the Fundão Dam: repercussions on the knowledge and practices of the teachers of the Bento Rodrigues school. Dissertation (Master's Degree in Education: Professional Master's Degree in Education and Teaching) - PROMESTRE. Federal University of Minas Gerais, Faculty of Education, Belo Horizonte, 2019. 173f.	P1	P1EF, P1EJ, P1EK
ANTUNES-ROCHA, Maria Isabel; SANTOS, Marcelo Loures dos. Impacts of the Fundão Dam collapse on the identity of rural schools: a study from the perspective of social representations. Federal University of Minas Gerais and Federal University of Ouro Preto, 2020.	P2	P2EB
JESUS, Rossely Valoni de. (in press) Social Representations of teachers about mining practice in Amarantina. 2025. Thesis (Doctorate in Education) – Federal University of Minas Gerais, Faculty of Education, Belo Horizonte, 2025.	P3	P3EA, P3EC, P3ED, P3EE, P3EG, P3EH, P3EI, P3EK

Source: Prepared by the authors.

RESULTS

The narrative interviews conducted with educators from schools in the villages of Bento Rodrigues and Amarantina aimed to identify, systematize and analyze the teachers' social representations about RBF and mining. In the set of data obtained, the reports on the relationship between mining companies and schools drew attention. It is observed that the partnership appears in the narratives through four actions. In the first, the support with donations for events is highlighted. In the second, material support for the school and students is present. In the third, it is possible to identify the company's involvement with continuing education activities for teachers. On Wednesday, participation in the pedagogical action is present, with emphasis on educational practices related to the theme of the environment.

The support for the events is narrated in the schools of Amarantina and Bento Rodrigues. In Amarantina, the interviewee "P3EA" quotes: "[...] there are some donations from the quarry here at the school [...]" (P3EA. Jesus, 2025). The donations were detailed by "P3EB" when it said that, in the "[...] June festival [...]" they donated gifts to bingo, [...] they have helped a lot at school". A situation also present at the school in Bento Rodrigues when the interviewee "P2EC" refers to the donation from the mining company: "She gave material, she had a children's party, any children's party they had there, we can't question that, I signed the letters for the association, she always contributed, she always helped. [...]" (P2EC. Antunes-Rocha *et al.*, 2020, p. 75).

Material support appears, for example, in the donation of pedagogical equipment and school uniforms. The interviewee "P3ED" narrates that "[...] the school has a

partnership with the company, even the partnership is even positive, because the company [...] provided some whiteboards for the school, provided uniforms for the students [...]" (P3ED). Jesus, 2025). The donation of uniforms was publicized in a regional newspaper: "We need to reinforce every day the company's commitment to strengthening education in Amarantina, through public-private partnerships [...]" (Brothers [...], 2023). The city hall website also published about the donation:

On Tuesday, May 16, the students of the Raimundo Felicíssimo Municipal School, in Amarantina, received new uniforms. Together with the school's director, Célio Augusto Pedrosa, and councilman Naércio Ferreira, deputy mayor Regina Braga signed a partnership with Pedreira Irmãos Machado and more than 1200 uniforms were distributed (Ouro Preto, 2023).

In these two actions, there is evidence of a substitution of the public power given that the companies meet basic needs for school functioning. In this sense, the professor says that "[...] The school needs this money, then, right?" (P3EEelement. Jesus, 2025). She complements by clarifying that it is necessary "[...] somehow take advantage of these situations that are disastrous and inevitable, right?" (P3EE. Jesus, 2025). The interviewee "P3ED" walks in the same direction when he says that the mining company is "[...] making up for a little of the deficiencies, let's say, of investment, that the State, sometimes, has a difficulty in investing in this educational issue [...]" (P3EDelement. Jesus, 2025). In the same sense, the narrative of the interviewee "P3EF" evidences the procedure as follows :

[...] in return for this, we have a lot of support from the mining company. It helps and assists the school well because we know very well that the government alone often does not maintain, financially well, an institution, it tries to maintain it, but it does not. So we have an institution today with good functioning, some equipment that we didn't have, a lot of data from the public management itself, from the mayor, but we have a lot of support from the mining company. She is very supportive of the school [...]. Sometimes, you need something like transportation, a bus, for the boys to go on a walk, something different, **they are here** (P3EF. Jesus, 2025).

In the phrase "They are here", highlighted in the excerpt from the narrative of P3EF, it is, in a way, a synthesis of the presence of mining companies in the daily life of the school, and that is why it was chosen as the title for the article. The strength of the expression gains relevance when listening to the narratives about the presence of companies in the third action, which concerns the participation of companies in continuing education activities.

The involvement of mining companies, notably through their Foundations, in projects aimed at continuing education of teachers is one of the most recurrent practices in the

relationship with schools and, therefore, is almost not noticed by teachers. In the 12 interviews, two were identified that mentioned the activity: "We learned composting, for example, the person came to teach how to do it. We teach the boys, not necessarily, we do it here with them, but we pass on what we learned to the children. For them to replicate at home [...]". (P3EF. Jesus, 2025). "But there was the "Environmental Attitude", which was from Vale, which they were very present at the school, always focused on the teacher [...]". (P1EG. Hunzicker, 2019, p. 119). As we have seen in these two excerpts from the narratives of "P1EG" and "P3EF", such a situation can, therefore, influence the ways of thinking, feeling and acting of educators with practices that signal to maintain a Pedagogical Silence without critical elements on the subject.

It is an action that, in a way, is directly linked to the involvement of companies with pedagogical practices related to the theme of Environmental Education. In these activities, teachers and students experience recycling workshops, dynamics, lectures, excursions, practical work such as vegetable garden and composting, to name a few, as apprentices. There is always a team that attends the school, develops the training and distributes materials such as pen sets, pencils, notebooks, coloring books, building games, among others, always containing the colors and the company's logo.

The interviewee "P3EG" mentions an ecological tour carried out by the mining enterprise with students and teachers of the school, "[...] I have already done a tour with them to visit the Tripuí Ecological Park [Tripuí Ecological Station, in Ouro Preto]. Did I go with the students? We paid a visit there [...]" (P3EH. Jesus, 2025). Another interviewee also narrates events held at the school, operated by mining companies: "There are events here too, at the school: theaters, there is always something for the boys, theater, everything focused on the environment [...]. So, we try to apply it in the best way. [...]. There was also a vegetable garden that they came here to make" (P3EF. Jesus, 2025).

The interviewee "P3EG" also narrated the company's performance regarding the construction of vegetable gardens in schools as an activity related to environmental issues: "Because there are many projects, right? They work a lot in this area of projects, of encouragement at school [...] donating seedlings to the school, planting them in schools" (P3EI, Jesus, 2025).

Related to the theme of the environment, the teacher talks about activities carried out together: "There is a party on Environment Day, they come, on Arbor Day, [...]" (P3EB. Jesus, 2025). Another teacher talks about this theme developed in schools: "The mining

company there works a lot with these themes, about the environment and the benefits they bring to us" (P3EJ. Jesus, 2025). By highlighting the absence of the mining theme in his educational practices, the teacher "P1EK" cites the performance of a foundation hired by the mining company to develop environmental activities at the school in Bento Rodrigues:

Look, within my [discipline] content, I never got to work [...] during my classes [...] I didn't have much focus on the mining area, but Samarco itself developed, at school, projects [...] themes focused on mining, on the environment, which seems to be a counterpart that the company has to provide the service. And it was at the time monitored by the Community Foundation of Higher Education of Itabira (FUNCESI) [...]. (P1EK. Hunzicker, 2019, p. 118).

It can be seen, in the narrative interview of "P1EK", that the discussion about mining was not present in the educational practice. However, the mining company was present in the school environment through projects implemented by a foundation hired by it to develop environmental projects. The excerpt from the interviewee "P1EK" highlights that this action "seems to be a counterpart", therefore, the narrative shows that the professor understands that the mining company causes socio-environmental impacts and needs to invest locally, that is, it is not a charity or donation, but a compensatory measure. Next, the teachers of the narratives point out how the activities were developed at the Bento Rodrigues school: "Some environmental education projects appear, both from the education department and many from the mining companies themselves, mainly from Vale. From Samarco it has also appeared". (P1EG. Hunzicker, 2019, p. 119). "[...] proposed to work on the issue of planting trees, [...] projects focused on the issue of the environment, it was always something that was offered at school. There were workshops with the students, tree plantations, all of this was developed at the school, there in Bento Rodrigues, during the period I worked there" (P1EK. Hunzicker, 2019, p. 118).

Professor "P1EL" exposes another way of acting by mining companies in relation to environmental education: "Samarco and Vale, always in the region of Santa Rita and Bento, had been giving many lectures on the environment, environmental awareness. [...]" (P1EL. Hunzicker, 2019, p. 118).

From this perspective, Hunzicker (2024, p. 47) points out:

The Pedagogical Silence occurs, therefore, in several configurations, among which it is reflected that the discussions on Environmental Education are not related most of the time to the local socio-environmental degradation agendas caused by the companies that drive such projects, in addition to dealing with environmental issues through the discourse of sustainability, which each one must preserve now in order to guarantee natural resources for future generations.

DISCUSSION

In the narratives described, it is possible to identify that the teachers understand the company's participation in the school as a substitute for the government and as a counterpart to the socio-environmental damage caused in the region.

Almeida (2016, p. 70), when analyzing the partnership between the public and the private, ponders on the circulation of a discourse created by companies in the school environment, which, "in addition to trying to cover up the socio-environmental impacts caused by mining activity, demonstrates a shift from the logic of the State to the logic of the market and civil society, from the public to the private". In addition, Alves *et al.* (2020) state that companies offer financial resources that should come from the government. On the other hand, these companies benefit from the situation by implementing an idea of a partnership with the school and, with this, disseminate a positive image of good practices in the communities where they operate.

It is worth mentioning that public schools receive resources from the Basic Education Development Fund (FUNDEB), with specific allocation for the acquisition of pedagogical tools and school supplies. It is possible to purchase uniforms with resources from transfers to social assistance. What draws attention is the participation of the government as an entity that supports and accompanies the partnership. Dissemination in the media is a procedure that requires a deeper understanding, as it is possible to say that there is an interest in the community as a whole being aware of the actions developed and that they are legitimized by the local authorities. In a way, it is a strategy to build the image of a company that, in a contradictory way, is in litigation with the parents, but in a benefactor relationship with the children.

The narratives about the actions aimed at partnership in the pedagogical work with the theme of the environment do not bring a problematization of the environmental damage caused by companies in the region. This can be considered as one of the faces of the company/school relationship, as one of the dimensions of Pedagogical Silence that became visible after the RBF. The focus of an Environmental Education centered on attitudes such as planting vegetable gardens, recycling, excursions to preserved areas, to name a few, in a context in which the forms of production and reproduction of life are threatened, causes a decontextualization of pedagogical practice. We found in the narratives teachers involved with the discussion about how to recycle paper (which is said

in advance to be necessary) in a situation in which the teachers themselves, parents and students have been experiencing, for almost a decade, the drama of contaminated water and soil, instability due to changes in housing and the loss of material and immaterial goods, forced expropriation, including in areas of family farming, where gardens supposedly exist as a food guarantee and income supplementation.

In the format in which it is narrated by the teachers, it is possible to say that the practices of Environmental Education are part of a conservative conception, as it works with guidelines linked to the preservation of nature and individual practices, but without questioning the causes and macro-social consequences of environmental damage (Martins; Freitas, 2022). Veiga *et al.* (2025) highlight the need for Environmental Education that discusses both issues related to the environment and the human interactions that affect it. In this sense, the school is a propitious space to promote reflections on the conscious use of natural resources.

One of the narratives brings the term counterpart as a way of registering that donations and support for pedagogical practices is a way to counterbalance the damage caused by companies. If at first this is an understanding that announces a more critical perspective on this relationship with the school, on the other hand, it can also signal an acceptance of the inevitable. There are damages that cannot be controlled, so the least you can do is to compensate the people affected. However, it is worth considering that the implementation of counterparts is one of the guarantees of the population's support when requesting environmental licensing for projects linked to mining activity (Martins; Freitas, 2022).

Another point to be discussed concerns the way companies deal with schools. The place of partners who help with small challenges, such as resources for an excursion, equipment purchases and uniform donations is, without a doubt, a path that leads directly to families, and, therefore, to the community. But it also contributes to creating barriers that prevent the emergence of more critical understandings of the RBF. The PoEMAS report (2015) draws attention to philanthropic actions as a way to cease and/or control conflicts with the population affected by the RBF.

The social protest against the degradation promoted by mining companies in the territories has been understood as a risk for the business world and, to manage this risk, companies seek to carry out a series of actions named sustainability and social responsibility. They believe that by promoting an approximation with the communities, through philanthropic actions, investments in social projects,

institutional relationships, etc., they could put an end to or even anticipate socio-environmental conflicts (PoEMAS, 2015, p. 37).

The company/school relationship is certainly a practice with a long historical duration, marked by financial, logistical and pedagogical support that, in most cases, makes up for the absence of public power in schools. Managers and teachers are grateful for the support and recognize the validity of the partnership. But the partnership goes beyond the school, as it reaches parents and the community as a whole. Thus, it is possible to understand how the silence around the rupture, identified in all the research carried out in these schools, is maintained even in a context in which the impacts are visible and are affecting the ways of producing and reproducing people's lives.

CONCLUSION

The literature points out that the mineral industry sector has historically established links through actions developed in schools. By focusing on how the teachers of Bento Rodrigues and Amarantina understand this relationship, it will be possible to perceive how the practices materialize in the school routine. This article evidenced the results of three studies developed with educators who work in five public schools, located in the village of Bento Rodrigues (Mariana), and in the district of Amarantina (Ouro Preto).

The data indicate that the actions undertaken through financial and logistical support for events, with financial support for the acquisition of school equipment and uniforms and with active participation in the training of teachers and in the construction of pedagogical practices for the work with the theme of Environmental Education, are indicators that the relationship between companies and schools is one of the relevant factors in the construction of Pedagogical Silence.

This reflection is based on the narratives of teachers who evidence philanthropic actions, which, for the most part, replace the responsibility of public entities. In this type of relationship, the place of the recipient is to thank them for the good deed. Therefore, there is no room for criticism or even the emergence of bonds that signal a relationship between equals. Those who donate are always above those who receive, because it is implicit in this model that someone has something to be donated to those who do not have it, or even have difficulties to conquer.

With regard to the narratives that highlight the strategies used by mining companies to implement the environmental agenda in school units, it is possible to say that they are

actions aimed at a perspective that can be called conservative. This is because they tend to attribute an responsibility for preserving the environment in an individualized way to each citizen. In addition, it is observed in the narratives that there are no elements that point to a problematization of how these companies cause socio-environmental damage in their processes of extraction, processing, transportation and transformation of mineral resources into industrial goods. By focusing on care for the environment, a shift in the causes and consequences of RBF is observed. Professors and students engage in practices considered conservationist and do not link environmental damage to the mining process and the dam failure.

It is necessary to consider that the power relations of mining companies are not restricted to the extraction of natural resources through the domination of the material territory. In addition, there is an intention to occupy the immaterial territory. From this perspective, these companies therefore use practices in the territory where they operate through the discourse linked to the "Mining-dependence" (Coelho, 2018) of economic practice necessary to generate employment and progress. From the business technology that surrounds the mining enterprise, it is possible to say that this is a calculated strategy, that is, it is necessary to keep the population that lives in the vicinity of the mines away from the concrete experience of the environmental, social and economic damage caused by mineral extraction. Learning not to see what is happening around you becomes much more effective when you learn in childhood and youth. Hence the interest in school.

The dialogue between mining companies and public education is not restricted to basic education schools, as Alves *et al* point out. (2020). There are partnerships and implementation of private capital in Universities and Federal Institutes to develop projects, research aimed at the interest of companies. It is a field of research that needs to be explored, in view of its potential for training professionals who, in the future, will work in companies.

The absence of the RBF as a theme to be worked on in school practice is undoubtedly the result of many factors, but it is important to understand each one of them so that it is possible to build forms of intervention anchored in a broader and multifactorial understanding of the identified problem. Therefore, it is understood that the data and reflections presented in this work can indicate possibilities for new research and also for teacher training projects, production of didactic materials and can contribute to the public

power being able to build management models with greater delimitation on its responsibilities.

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