

## Social representations of the school according to students, teachers and people in general: a longitudinal analysis

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### Abstract

The project aimed at analyzing the social representations that the school has for teachers and students of Basic Education (Elementary and High School), and for non-academic people. The data resulted from a longitudinal survey developed since 2007 to 2014, through interviews with two questions: "How important is school?" and "Does the school fulfill its role? Why?". The interviews were split in three segments and there were 991 participants as follows: 335 students, 335 common people and 321 teachers. Being aware of these perceptions and checking the differences between what teachers, students and ordinary people think can help us understand the current social behavior towards school as an educational institution.

*Key words: social representation; school institution; students/teachers/people.*

### Introduction

The survey examined perceptions of teachers, students and non-academic people, about the importance of the school institution and how they evaluate the fulfillment of its social role.

The work is based on the Theory of Social Representation (TSR) which, according to Moscovici (1994), is a way of personal knowledge that aims at the development of behaviors and communication among individuals. Its main feature is the imagistic, symbolic, significant, autonomous, creative and constructive character.

### Results and Discussion

The data were collected from the interviews, which were grouped in categories according to the content analysis method proposed by Bardin (2009). The question "How important is school?" brought up five major answer categories shown in the table below.

**Chart 1.** The importance of school.

Categories	Students	Teachers	People
Teaching and Formation	35%	32%	35%
Socialization and Citizenship	24%	40%	31%
Humanistic Formation	13%	21%	22%
Future Expectations	18%	6%	11%
No importance	1%	2%	1%

"Does the school fulfill its role? Why?" The answers to these questions were divided into four broad categories, found in Table 2.

**Chart 2.** Fulfillment of the Role of the School.

Categories	Students	Teachers	People
Yes	36%	11%	12%
Yes, but	15%	15%	19%
Partially	26%	34%	24%
No	21%	39%	45%
No answer	2%	2%	1%

Regarding the analysis of each category and the subsequent subcategories, it was possible to draw to some assumptions made at the beginning of the project and also to turn down others about the different perceptions of the subjects and between the three groups of subjects concerning the school institution today.

### Conclusions

It was noticed that although the subjects belong to different groups, most of them give a positive significance to school. As for the fulfillment of the role of the institution, most of teachers and people stated that the role has not been effective, whereas students demonstrate proper functioning of the institution.

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