

MARXISM AND POPULAR EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

To seek the construction and consolidation of a popular educational principle is a central element for any project of liberation of the exploited. Starting from the Marxist recognition that capitalist societies are divided in social classes, it is indispensable that the oppressed have their own pedagogical formulation. Among the aspects that can be approached on this theme, we will highlight here the importance of the thoughts of Marx, Lenin and Gramsci for education. Some reflections of Paulo Freire, fundamental for the construction of a popular education, will also be highlighted. Finally, questions on indigenous education will be addressed, especially on its challenges.

Keywords: Marxism. Popular Education. Subalterns.

EL MARXISMO Y LA EDUCACIÓN POPULAR

RESUMEN

Buscar la construcción y la consolidación de un principio educativo de carácter popular es un elemento central para cualquier proyecto de liberación de los explotados. A partir del reconocimiento, hecho por el marxismo, de que las sociedades capitalistas están escindidas por clases sociales, es indispensable que los oprimidos tengan su propia formulación pedagógica. Entre los aspectos que pueden abordarse sobre este tema, aquí se destacará la importancia de los pensamientos de Marx, Lenin y Gramsci para la educación. También se resaltan reflexiones de Paulo Freire, fundamentales para la construcción de una educación popular. Por último, se abordarán cuestiones sobre la educación indígena, principalmente sobre sus desafíos.

Palabras clave: Marxismo. Educación Popular. Subalternos.

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RESUMO

Buscar a construção e a consolidação de um princípio educativo de caráter popular é um elemento central para qualquer projeto de libertação dos explorados. Partindo do reconhecimento, feito pelo marxismo, de que as sociedades capitalistas estão cindidas por classes sociais, é indispensável que os oprimidos tenham a sua própria formulação pedagógica. Entre os aspectos que podem ser abordados sobre esse tema, aqui será destacada a importância

dos pensamentos de Marx, Lenin e Gramsci para a educação. Também serão ressaltadas algumas reflexões de Paulo Freire, fundamentais para a construção de uma educação popular. Por fim, serão tratadas as questões sobre a educação indígena, principalmente sobre os seus desafios.

Palavras-Chave: Marxismo. Educação Popular. Subalternos.

Introduction

It is inevitable to speak of Marxism and education today without referring to the attacks that the former has been suffering under the latter. A certain type of conservatism increasingly organized in civil society has occupied the Brazilian state. Religious, military and ultra-liberal groups have begun to attack the democratic gains of recent decades. In more than one opportunity they united against "the danger of communism" to try to convince the whole society of their agendas. The imposition of certain religious principles, harsher laws against the "crime" and radical push of market values over the social world constitute the tripod of the ongoing restoration.

A restoration that acts in economic, political and ethical-moral fields. Its movement oscillates between conservative, reactionary or even fascist. Mainly since 2013, this wave has gained the streets, strengthening itself enormously.

Particularly in the field of education, there is a strong movement that aims at the occupation of educational institutions to impose what can be defined as intellectual and moral Counter-Reformation. Schools and universities have become important targets of religious, military and ultra-liberal groups. All of them intend that the country goes back to the pre-1988 context.

In this process, a high number of bizarre ideas emerged. Illogical and a-historical formulations have strangely gained strength among many social groups. Different areas of knowledge are questioned as if all of them were under control of an obscure definition of "ideology". Their goal is to impose on the educational spaces of the country a set of explanations devoid of critical analysis about society.

In such a context, Marxism became a central enemy to be suppressed. To become complete, Restoration cannot give up the elimination of historical materialism. In an extremely fanciful way, the restorative movement states that Marx's ideas are the main ideology present in Brazilian schools and universities. These misunderstandings do not translate into defeats, because the fight takes place on any democratic expression existing in educational spaces. In other words, despite being incorrect, this statement is devastating the achievement of democratic education, because any expression of freedom of thought and criticism of the world is mechanically associated with "Marxist ideology".

As a watchword, the fight against Marxist indoctrination turned out to be quite effective. Under this flag, the bill known as "School without Party" emerged, which is a rather questionable project that seeks to overshadow the already scarce democratic spaces in educational institutions. However, this bill has not yet won enough social and political support to pass in national or local parliaments. In any case, it represents a major advance of the anti-democratic and anti-popular forces.

In this context, the performance of political and culturally reactionary figures such as Olavo de Carvalho also stands out. He can be considered the principal intellectual of this whole process in motion. An old critic of Marxism, especially of Antonio Gramsci, Carvalho, with the appearance and massification of new forms of communication, managed to bring his anti-democratic and anti-grassroots ideas to millions of Brazilians. Criticizing an alleged "Marxist" domination of the universities, this figure went on to defend the confrontation of "leftist" ideas.

This restorative project, culturally wide, compromises the development of any popular pedagogical practice. Moreover, it should also be emphasized that Paulo Freire also became one of the main targets of this obscure movement.

Indeed, the lower class is the one most affected by these anti-grassroots conceptions for education. The case of the indigenous people is a good example of this situation. As will be highlighted later, the Brazilian indigenous peoples have

always been subjected to the education of non-indigenous, which highlights the need to create and strengthen educational experiences organically linked to popular life.

1. Marxist pedagogy

By inaugurating a new way of understanding reality, in which it recognizes the existence of a permanent antagonism between social classes, Marx has decisively contributed to an innovative understanding of education and its historical role.

Especially about capitalist society, characterized by the conflict between the working class and the bourgeoisie, Marx placed education within the existing class interests. In the Marxist conception of the world, instead of representing the desires of all humanity, education is restricted to the horizons of the classes in antagonism. The bourgeoisie defends a formation focused on the division between physical and intellectual work, between those who perform and those who think. In this way, the ruling class remains in the spaces of control of society, in functions that require high intellectual abilities. They preserve important social hierarchies for the maintenance of their power. In this context, the workers are pure executors of mechanical actions in the production of goods.

To formulate pedagogical notions that could meet the interests of the exploited, Marx indicated the need to overcome the division between manual and intellectual work, focusing on an integral formation of the workers. They should reconcile the technical-manual knowledge of the factories with the general studies of history. However, his statements were made at a time that was still quite adverse and precarious concerning access to formal education for workers. There were little educational achievements for the exploited.

Even if Marx did not make systematic progress on the subject of education, he promoted a qualitative leap in the understanding of human formation within capitalism. Thanks to his method/broad conception of the world,

education can be analyzed from the perspective of conflicting interests of the social classes.

A few decades after Marx's death, thinking of the revolutionary Russian context, Lenin also made considerations about education. Following Marx's analysis, Lenin identified as central the overcoming of the division between manual and intellectual labor. Lenin faced an ongoing revolutionary process in a society still with major pre-capitalist brands, which posed quite concrete problems to be solved. The construction of socialism, of the new society, forced the leaders of the revolution, and Lenin in particular, to take a stand on a multitude of situations. A first observation made by Lenin was that, in this context, there was no room for the action of leaders outside the unity between theory and practice.

Lenin recognized education as a central dimension for the construction of socialism. He defended the urgent need for Polytechnic training for children and young people, aiming at empowering the new generations in the conduct of the productive life of the country. Educational institutions should be free for all citizens, secular and capable of raising the cultural level of the population. It must be remembered that the revolutionaries came across a reality in which the overwhelming majority of Russians were illiterate. Of course, it was clear that without overcoming this problem communist society would not become a reality. The magnitude of the challenge could be measured by numbers:

In Russia in 1913, for a population of 160 million, there were only 434 gymnasiums and 276 vocational schools, all of which were attended by only 160,000 children and adolescents. In 1915, only 8 million children attended the 1st, 2nd and 3rd classes of primary education; and only 948 thousand reached the 4th class (BITTAR and FERREIRA Jr., 2011, p. 390).

Aware of the importance of broad knowledge for young people, Lenin, in turn, was against any movement that could limit them to a world view restricted to Marxism. It was essential to know the bourgeois science, at least, its best traditions.

Anyway, in the field of education, Russians should build new forms of learning, starting from historical materialism. Breaking away from bourgeois

education, based on the separation between theory and practice, Lenin had the perfect notion that the production of knowledge should be organically linked to the productive world especially in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution.

At that moment, knowing the theoretical principles of communism could not be accepted outside of a practical effort to materialize them. Philosophy, politics, and economics were dialectical and explicitly articulated. As he says:

That is why it would be extremely incorrect to simply give free rein to what the books say about communism. Our speeches and articles today are not a mere repetition of what was said before about Communism because our speeches and articles are linked to our daily and multilateral work. Without work, without struggle, the theoretical knowledge of communism, acquired in communist brochures and works, is worth absolutely nothing, because it would prolong the old divorce between theory and practice, this ancient divorce that was the most repugnant trait of the old bourgeois society (LENINE, 1980, p. 387).

Knowledge and life cannot be separated. Since there was no education apart from class contradictions, a new and original pedagogy that could serve the interests of the workers and peasants should be created. Therefore, a communist education must be in dialectic with the real struggles of the exploited people. Only in this way a critical and elevated consciousness, truly emancipatory, would be able to foster.

When Lenin took office, he faced a school that was still attached to the educational principle that, on the one hand, limited the working classes to minimum knowledge, while, on the other, sought to develop erudition among the ruling classes. Even when history was taught to most young people, it was far away from Russian reality.

Although Lenin is not very cited in works on the relation Marxism/education, he contributed to the construction of a new pedagogy during the revolution.

An author that is more quoted in reflections on Marxist education is Antonio Gramsci. As previously pointed out, Gramsci belongs to the group of thinkers persecuted by the current Brazilian restoration movement. In this context, presenting his reflections on education is a priority act.

The relationship that the Italian Marxist author had with education was striking within his biography. Coming from a poor family, he had big challenges to study since childhood. As a child, he realized the injustices of the Italian education, when many students could not continue in schools, because they were poor, while others remained simply because they had more financial resources, despite not having much interest.

Gramsci was a victim of this system, because, even though he was keen to study, he always faced the difficulties of a poor child. This occurred before and after his trip to Turin, when he began university studies – also with many financial difficulties and he did not finish it. This personal situation of the author is not a minor element of his life and is certainly present in his theoretical formulations on education.

From the beginning of his political militancy, still in the Italian Socialist Party, Gramsci was concerned with the formation of the working class. Whether through the press or in the "clubs of culture", as he defined them, he intended to promote an education favorable to awareness of class.

Faced with a reality unfavorable to formal education, with an exhaustive working day, the cultural training of workers should be a central element of their organizations. Socialist magazines and newspapers should be concerned about this. They were an instrument for promoting content connected with the universe of workers. The articles should expose and debate what the schools, marked by the interests of the ruling classes, did not expose. Philosophy, arts, science, economics, culture, literature, politics, religion, among many other subjects, should be addressed taking into account the interests of the exploited. For this, a tie with the lives of the workers was indispensable. To know the life of the oppressed concretely was a moral duty of the leaders.

Another space of formation defended by Gramsci in his militancy was the so-called "club of culture" – which aimed at the political-cultural and ethical-moral formation of workers. In this space, the knowledge acquired in their general social relations and their offices should be valued. Regardless of being abstract, the

contents should be linked to the life inside and outside the process of production, that is, inside and outside factories. Gramsci believed in the possibility of extracting from the reality of the workers what they had of best as human beings. The dull and detached of their lives teaching of the bourgeois school should be replaced by a pedagogy that met their interests. Absorbing content mechanically, without ties with reality, does not serve the interests of the exploited in his opinion. Moreover, the hierarchical and sometimes pedantic sense, present in the ethical principle of bourgeois education, should be radically opposed. A new human formation should be created.

After his arrest by the fascist regime in 1926, Gramsci began to plan the development of a series of research. That's the way he found to face the bruising routine of prison. To remain lucid and somehow still militant were his goals.

Education was discussed by the author. As it is a mark of Gramscian thought, the subjects developed in the so-called Cuaderni del carcere are organically linked. Thus, questions about education, at various times, relate to other themes such as the State, hegemony, culture, intellectuals, etc.

Gramsci does not separate schools and education from factory and production relations. In this regard, it is directly linked to the ideas of Marx and Lenin. He also tried to solve the problem posed by bourgeois pedagogy that separates intellectual from manual work. And he developed the project of the "unit school", following the proposals of the authors cited. Gramsci said that the trend in his time was that of

abolish any type of school "disinterested"(not immediately interested) and "formative", or to keep only its small specimen, aimed at a small elite of lords and women who should not think of preparing - if for a professional future, as well as to disseminate more and more specialized professional schools, in which the destination of the student and his future activity are predetermined. The crisis will have a solution that, rationally, should follow this line: a single initial school of general culture, humanist, formative, which fairly balances the development of the ability to work manually (technically, industrially) and the development of intellectual work capacities. From this type of single school, through repeated experiences of professional orientation, one will move to one of the specialized schools or to productive work (GRAMSCI, 2001, p .33-34, v.2).

In general, education representing the interests of workers should unite theory and practice. Overcoming the dichotomy present in bourgeois teaching is at the heart of Marxist pedagogy.

Anyway, beyond the concern to build an integral education, Gramsci elevates this theme to the complex dimensions of the superstructure. The formation of a new conception of the world and of mankind, founded on the philosophy of praxis, needs an educational principle that must be present not only in schools. Not only the state but any institution or organization of civil society carries out class functions. They spread ideologies in the social world, with antagonistic objectives, each representing the interests of specific classes. In all processes of spreading ideas that seek the active consensus of the masses, there is the need for an educational principle. In the case of an anticapitalist education, the popular classes must play an active role in the construction of the new conception, not only as recipients of content but also as formulators of knowledge. The new emancipatory hegemony depends on this formative reorientation. The leadership-directed relationship must change, breaking with the cultural hierarchy between one and the other. Intellectuals know, but do not feel; the people feel, but do not know. This is a situation identified by Gramsci and that must be overcome. For this, a new ethic must be developed. Respect for the alterity of popular classes is a primary part of the process.

Knowing effectively the life and thought of the subordinates is a central element to establish a democratic relationship between the leader and the directed. Such a position should be present in the various organizations and institutions of the political and cultural formation of popular classes. Undoubtedly, this is also a proposal of popular education, in the broad sense for the whole society or even in particular for schools. An emancipating education, which effectively serves the interests of workers, cannot reproduce the bourgeois educational principle – founded on competition, individualism, and hierarchy – it must instead create superior human values.

Besides not separating education from the productive process, Gramsci takes a step further in understanding the role that the former began to play within civil society and in the complex relationships established in superstructures. This situation, seen and experienced by Gramsci, was perhaps not present at the time of Marx or in Lenin's Russian reality. For this reason, the Italian author ends up formulating a reflection on the theme of education that is quite topical at the beginning of the 21st century.

Within Marxism, Gramsci is an indispensable author for thinking about a truly popular and creative education. In the Brazilian context, in the middle of the 20th century, Paulo Freire will be another great author of a working-class education.

2. Educator of the oppressed

Paulo Freire is considered the main Brazilian reference for thinking about the theme of popular education. In several other countries, his ideas have also been widely accepted.

Influenced by historical materialism, Freire created a pedagogy focused on the interests of the oppressed masses. He formulated a method of literacy linked to the life of the exploited, aiming at transforming the act of learning to read and write in political action. In the context of millions of illiterates in Brazil, the insertion of illiterates into the universe of letters to raise their political consciousness made Paulo Freire a reference in the fight against national injustices.

To overcome the education focused on teaching that promotes inequalities, Freire elaborated a new pedagogy that was not tied to the teaching of a purely formal knowledge of life. For Freire, as important as memorizing the alphabet or knowing how to use the letters in the construction of the words was to be able to place them in the field of ideologies, cultural struggles, conflicts of interests, that is, of the struggle between the social classes. In ideologies

individuals become aware of their world, a principle proposed by Marxism and that Freire is in full agreement.

His pedagogical conception is innovative precisely because it puts the construction of words in the field of class struggle, so literacy is a political act of awareness about the world. This is a break with the pedagogy of the ruling classes. For the latter, the formation of phrases is a formal and distant of economic-social injustice process.

However, Paulo Freire not only created a new way of literacy for the exploited but also advanced in the construction of a broad conception of education. His work makes this quite evident. In his reflections, the state, the economy, the culture, the school, the teacher and the student are present. This set of elements makes his pedagogy complex, in fact, an integral philosophy of education.

Always seeking to express the interests of the popular classes, Freire creates his conception of teaching based on part of the lives of the exploited. It is no less important that one of his main texts is defined as the Pedagogy of the oppressed. In this book, the author seeks to insert the theme of teaching and learning within the class society, marked by the antagonisms and domination.

Paulo Freire emphasizes the need to create a pedagogy of the working classes, understanding them as the historical subject capable of incorporating the possibilities of the emancipation of all humanity. In this sense, he conceives a philosophy of education linked to a conception of human beings, aiming at building a process of formation antagonistic to that carried out by the ruling classes. Freire translates the historical materialism into educational theory. The horizon is the emancipated society, free from the human exploitation caused by the logic of capital accumulation.

In his reading, the pedagogy of the oppressed aims to free the human being from the authoritarian system of bourgeois formation imposed on the "will to be more" of the individuals. Characterized by dehumanization, the "pedagogy of the oppressor" prevents free-thinking, creativity and the collective dimension

of knowledge. According to Paulo Freire, emancipating knowledge, which must be linked to the transformation of the world, needs a specific pedagogy to be created. In the world of class contradictions, education has become a mechanism of domination, yet for this very reason, it has also become a means of liberation. Oppositions require the construction of a pedagogy that expresses the life and interests of the exploited. Freire realizes this need and deepens the elements that can compose such a pedagogical conception. The human being who feels the need to humanize himself is not reciprocated by the conceptions of education of the oppressor.

The so-called education "bank" is the symbol of the pedagogy of the oppressor, in which the subjectivity of the pupil is understood as a space to be filled bureaucratically by content disconnected from their experiences. In this context, knowledge is conceived as a static and lifeless datum, a formal illustration of the reality that does not promote the possibility of transformation. The educator stands as the only agent of his relationship with the educating. The active role of the pedagogical process is in the one that transmits the content, while the one who receives it is passive. As Freire says,

To the extent that this "bank" vision nullifies the creative power of students or minimizes it, stimulating their naivety and not their criticism, satisfies the interests of oppressors: for them, the fundamental is not the undoing of the world, its transformation. (...) This is why they react, even instinctively, against any attempt of a stimulating education of authentic thinking, which does not allow itself to be entangled by partial visions of reality, always seeking the next that hold a point to another, or a problem to another (FREIRE, 2005, p. 69).

The goal of banking education is precisely to remove from education its importance in the process of building knowledge about the world. This is an ethical principle of the pedagogy of the dominant, that is, its value foundation demands such conception. There is no other possibility of remaining an oppressor other than through the submission of the student in the learning process. For this reason, maintaining the relationship of superiority of the educator, in a naturalized and unquestionable way, is a pillar of banking education. Just as the other social relations are naturalized in capitalism, their

education must also ensure the subordination of the students in an a-historical way. There is no promotion of the intellectual and moral autonomy of students after all the central element of the process is to keep them only as objects.

This educational configuration is based on a natural premise that students have neither own thoughts about themselves nor, much less, about their world. In general, this concept is also present among the political theorists of liberalism who identify in the popular masses an ontological inability to understand the problems of the state and political life. Thus, the popular masses should delegate power to those who possess the intellectual conditions to lead society. Freire identifies this conception within the education of the dominant classes, translated into the teacher-student relationship.

Paulo Freire finds in the dialogue between those who teach and those who learn, a way to overcome the hierarchical scenario between one and other. The dialogical and radically democratic action between educator and student, seeking the production of knowledge, is a key point of the pedagogy of the oppressed. After all, it responds to the human desire to rise intellectually and morally to ever wider and more complex levels. The desire to be more finds in the dialogical relationship a fundamental dimension. Here the otherness in the pedagogical process is present, from which the existence of the other is recognized in its rich expression. To build with the student, in the case of the pedagogy of the oppressed, and with the worker, a space for dialogue, debate, and reflection is to promote their intellectual and human freedom. Otherness and emancipation go together in Freire's conception of education.

In this pedagogy, the oppressed speak and, consequently, develop her/his vision of the world. In the popular education, students, victimized by inequalities, become the subject of the process, that is, an active being in the construction of knowledge. His life and his human experience are part of pedagogical development. They are important dimensions of investigations and problematizations. The educator is not absolute in its importance, nor is he alone able to contribute to the construction of knowledge. Hierarchies disappear,

authoritarianism is replaced by democracy, the multiplicity of formulations on reality, coming from the students, is the starting point for the elevation and complexification of thought. Cultural respect on the part of the educator for pupils is a constitutive element of the pedagogy of the oppressed.

Freire's philosophy of education is a fundamental concept for the freedom of the oppressed and, founded on moral and intellectual autonomy, is radically opposed to the pedagogy of the dominant. With Paulo Freire, an original path is opened for the process of human formation of the workers. Undoubtedly, his work is a central chapter of the great production that begins with Marx and passes through other important authors.

It is not by chance that Freire developed his thinking in a society like the Brazilian one. Its deep economic and social inequalities made the author dedicate himself to the formulation of a pedagogy that could remove millions of individuals from the hegemony of the ruling classes. Workers, peasants, indigenous people, people living on river banks, quilombolas, peripherals, among other subaltern groups, found in Paulo Freire a systematic thought to build their intellectual liberation.

3. The education of subordinates: the case of indigenous people

As already mentioned, the Brazilian society is currently experiencing a moment of conservative restoration in economic, political, cultural, moral and, also, educational dimensions. Fundamental achievements of education obtained after the re-democratization are openly threatened by Bolsonaro. The restorative power aims at recovering educational principles from authoritarian tradition.

Marxism and Freire's thoughts are among the obstacles identified by restoration. Certainly, this compromises any emancipatory education project. For the lower classes, it means the interruption, or at least a risk, of projects and educational experiences of a popular and anti-capitalist character. This seems to be the case of indigenous education.

Brazilian history is full of actions of the state or civil organizations, aiming at spreading the ideas of ruling classes throughout the national territory. For centuries, Christianity and liberalism were the main concepts of the world that founded the education of lower classes.

Since the colonial period, the indigenous, for example, have been always seen as subjects that needed to be "included" to the national society. And with such purpose, churches and the state sought "to educate" and tame the "wild inhabitant". This conception survived the end of the Monarchy and remained, as a state policy, in the Republic. Throughout the twentieth century, the incorporation of indigenous people to Brazil continued as the objective of the ruling classes and education always played a key role.

Despite indigenous people being the social group most focused on by the state project, other segments of society were also the target of the pedagogical practices of the oppressors. During the centuries of colonization, the indigenous people went through several educational experiences, all being guided by priests or other representatives of the church.

The implementation of school projects for indigenous people is almost as old as the establishment of the first colonial agents in Brazil. The political submission of the indigenous populations, the invasion of their traditional areas, the pillage and destruction of their wealth, etc. have been, since the 16th century, the result of practices that have always known how to combine methods of political control with some type of school civilizing activity. These school activities developed systematically and planned: the missionaries, who were first in charge of this task, devoted much reflection, tenacity, and effort to it. Colonialism, education for the indigenous, and religious proselytism are practices that have, in Brazil, the same origin and more or less the same age (SILVA and AZEVEDO, 1995, p. 149).

In this period a method widely used for domination was the linguistic control of the indigenous people. One sought to map the languages spoken by indigenous peoples to disseminate Christian values and, consequently, civilization. This process completely ignored the existence of this other. Pedagogical practices occurred in an authoritarian way.

However, in addition to seeking to understand native languages for the process of colonization, they also carried out the movement to eliminate these

languages for the benefit of the civilized language. Throughout centuries, the Portuguese language was imposed on the numerous ethnicities existing in the Brazilian territory and this, certainly, meant the disappearance of many other languages spoken originally in Brazil.

As early as the end of the 20th century, when the indigenous movement began to claim a specific school for its populations, the theme of respect for languages spoken by ethnic groups was central. Even teachers should preferably be indigenous. These elements were deemed fundamental to an indigenous education that respected them.

In the nineteenth century, education for indigenous peoples began to play the role to prepare the workforce, aiming at integrating them into the country.

The agenda for the assimilation of indigenous populations to the global order comprehended the social and the cosmological. The monarchic state considered that formal education for the indigenous people was synonymous with Catholic catechesis. (The aberration represented by the imposition of official state religion on indigenous peoples was questioned by indigenous scholars only with the Republic.) The idea of assimilation, in turn, was closely linked to the transformation of indigenous people into a workforce (AMOROSO, 1998. p. 4).

The goal has always been to build a school that could homogenize the formation of Brazilians, regardless of the specific characteristics of a diverse country like Brazil.

During practically the whole twentieth century, the attempt to transform the indigenous people into non-indigenous mobilized not only the state but also many other civil organizations – almost all of them of religious nature. Whether to transform them into workers or Christians, the indigenous people, for most of history, has been denied as a singular subject.

Only with the re-democratization and the new Constitution of 1988, the indigenous peoples began to obtain certain rights, enabling the elaboration of public policies focused on their education.

The relevance of some organized groups of civil society in the formulation of policies for indigenous education has been a reason for important conquest in Brazil in recent decades. Different political actors involved in the implementation of the new indigenous school – non-governmental organizations, indigenous movements, and state agencies -, from different positions and political

perspectives, make similar speeches about the education required. It is as if the voices of indigenous societies, silenced for centuries by educational policies, could finally formulate and explain their school project, make it echo and reproduce, even under intense debate and conflict, in the form of new public policy proposals to be developed by the Brazilian State (MONTE, 2000, p.8).

Indigenous teacher movements emerged strongly in this context. Their claims were clear: respect for ethnic diversity. Only in this way would it be possible to plan and implement a pedagogy open to the contents, languages, and the involved students.

The fact that the case of indigenous education has been highlighted does not mean that other subordinate groups present better situations. Until the process of re-democratization, national education was conceived from two pillars: Christianity and the mercantile values of the bourgeois. Only after the promulgation of the Constitution of 1988, influenced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, education began to be seen from other perspectives. After that, the population of the countryside, black people, LGBT groups and workers, in general, have been able to satisfy their educational demands minimally.

Undoubtedly, the construction of a new proposal of education for the country was strongly influenced by Marxism and Paulo Freire. Marx and Gramsci's ideas were fundamental in the elaboration of the historical-critical pedagogy by Dermeval Saviani (SAVIANI, 2005). Numerous proposals and various educational documents had their main reference in this pedagogy. Paulo Freire's thoughts, in the same way, was and still is the hallmark of popular education. Indigenous people, quilombolas, workers of the countryside and the city, among other groups, obtain in his work an indispensable means of reflection. Many educational experiences built by these groups and classes were referenced by Freire's thought.

To build a truly national education, it is inevitable to overcome the binomial Christianity-bourgeois mercantile values, because this cannot represent all the social and cultural complexity of the country and it tends to the authoritarian imposition on other existing conceptions of the world. Developing an education

that contemplates the life of the majority of the population is a fundamental point of the construction of a popular and radically democratic nation.

Final considerations

The discussion presented in this text demonstrates the theoretical capacity of historical materialism to build an alternative proposal of education for the classes and popular groups. This proposal would be an alternative to the education of classes and dominant groups that aim at the appropriation of the critical subjectivity of dominated groups.

Overcoming the division imposed by the bourgeoisie between manual and intellectual work is something pointed out by Marx as quite important. However, during the development of capitalism, other obstacles have arisen for the working classes, such as the need to build a non-authoritarian educational environment.

These challenges continue to be important, especially in the face of the restorative process and the intellectual and moral Counter-Reform posed to Brazil in recent years. The complexity of the situation requires a broad reading and action by popular and democratic movements on this subject.

Surely, the formation of labor for the reproduction of capital is a central point of the education of the dominant classes. However, beyond this final objective, there is the pedagogical dimension of how the teaching takes place. In other words, the pedagogical aspects used to conform individuals to the environment of the relations of production must also be analyzed and defied, because, almost always, conservative ethical elements are present.

Antonio Gramsci contributed to a broader interpretation of the role of education in bourgeois society. As a result of the development of the wealth accumulation process, capitalism has built an increasingly complex civil society, which has created problems with many levels of solutions. In this context, education ceases to be only the expression of the division between manual and intellectual work, since it becomes increasingly important in the ethical, political and cultural control of the exploited masses. Education becomes a central pillar

of the hegemony of ruling classes. It is precisely for this reason that subordinate classes need to find ways to build their pedagogy, aiming at a formation capable of raising their vision of the world. So, the single school is as important as the ethical-moral posture of the intellectuals of the workers for the educational process.

Paulo Freire, one of the greatest Pedagogues of the 20th century, contributed decisively to a better understanding of the relationship between educator and students, within his pedagogy of the oppressed.

Freire's understanding of the education of the popular classes was seen as an alternative to the educational principle of the ruling classes. Many groups historically subordinated by the hegemony of the rich achieved an integral philosophy of the process of human formation in the liberating pedagogy of the Brazilian author. Not only the working class but also peasants, indigenous people, quilombolas¹ and peripherals, in general, found fundamental answers to the challenges posed by the pedagogy of the oppressor in Paulo Freire.

Emphasizing the importance of authors and conceptions linked to classes and popular groups in the current historical moment of integral restoration and of intellectual and moral contradiction are duties of philosophy and science that seek the spiritual elevation of individuals.

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¹ Quilombola: former slaves living in communities that date back to slavery times.

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